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The women's voluntary services, a study of war and volunteering in Camden, 1939-1945

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**THE WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES, A STUDY OF WAR AND
VOLUNTEERING IN CAMDEN, 1939-1945.**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Camden is a country town whose history and development has been influenced by war. The town was part of Australia's homefront war effort, and from the time of the Boer War the most important part of this for Camden was volunteering. The Second World War was no exception, and the most influential voluntary organisation that contributed to the town's war effort was the Women's Voluntary Services [WVS].

The Camden WVS was part of the close cultural and emotional links that existed between Camden and Great Britain that began with the Macarthur family in the early nineteenth century. Camden saw itself as a 'little England' and the WVS used this feeling to great effect during the war, stressing notions of 'home' and a shared sense of identity and place with Britain. The Camden WVS was part of a strong tradition of Victorian female philanthropy in the town, which attracted, and depended on, middle class women socialised in Victorian notions of service, 'ideals of dependence', a 'separatedness of spheres', patriarchy, the status quo, and by the inter-war period, modernity.

Although the WVS was created specifically to meet the needs generated by the Second World War, it shared the characteristics of a number of British organisations that were established within Camden's female philanthropy by the female elite after 1900. These organisations did not compete with each other, and were characterised by overlapping membership, inter-organisational co-operation, conservatism, Protestantism, leadership by the Camden elite and a decentralised branch network. All of which was underpinned by parochialism. The women who founded these voluntary organisations gained valuable wartime experience from their efforts during the Boer and First World Wars, and this contributed to the eventual success of WVS in the town.

In essence, the Camden WVS was a war-specific British voluntary organisation that connected with Camden's Anglo-centric heritage and cultural origins. The central doctrine of the WVS was an ethos of service, which was based on altruism, imperial patriotism and British nationalism. Volunteering for the WVS, which involved self-sacrifice and dedication to duty, directed Camden's tradition of female philanthropy towards the moral imperative of a righteous war. Camden women willingly

undertook voluntary service for the WVS in the belief that they gave their time and effort to help 'their boys', and in doing so, 'did their bit for the war effort'. Its influence was great enough to spill over into many other aspects of Camden's war effort, including those run by the men of the town.

This study of the WVS has allowed the teasing out of some of the main threads of Camden's wartime experience. In the process it has also illustrated that wartime philanthropy was bound up with class, gender expectations, intimacy, conservatism, patriarchy, parochialism (localism) and Camden's rural ideology. Deeply embedded in Camden, the WVS reflected its community.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAMWS	Australian Army Medical Women's Service
ACF	Australian Comforts Fund
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AWAS	Australian Women's Army Service
CBE	Commander of (the Order of) the British Empire.
CMG	Companion of (the Order of) St Michael & St George
CWA	Country Women's Association
MBE	Member (of the Order) of the British Empire
NRMA	National Roads and Motorists' Association
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RSSAILA	Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
VDC	Volunteer Defence Corps
WVS	Women's Voluntary Services
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
UAP	United Australia Party

LIST OF CONVERSIONS

During the Second World War, and earlier, Australia used the Imperial System of weights and measures. Below are the equivalences:

12 inches	-	1 foot
3 feet	-	1 yard
1 mile	-	1760 yards
1 inch	-	25.4 millimetres
1 foot	-	0.3048 metres
1 yard	-	0.9144 metres
1 mile	-	1.61 kilometres
1 square mile	-	2.59 square kilometres
1 pound	-	0.45 kilograms
1 hundredweight (cwt)	-	50.8 kilograms
1 ton	-	1.02 tonnes
16 ounces	-	1 pound (lb)
112 pounds	-	1 hundredweight (cwt)
100 hundredweight	-	1 ton

Money equivalences at date of conversion in Australia, 14 February 1966.

1d (penny)	-	0.83 cents
1s (shilling)	-	10 cents
£1 (pound)	-	\$2
£1/1/- (guinea)	-	\$2.1
12 pennies	-	1 shilling
20 shillings	-	1 pound

Expression: £1/15/1 - 1 pound, 15 shillings, 1 penny.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis arose from my curiosity about Camden's wartime history while undertaking an undergraduate course in Australian History conducted by Dr Winifred Mitchell in 1980. On the completion of the course I started collating material relating to wartime activities in Camden, and first presented it a conference held by the Australian War Memorial in July 1989. After an initial meeting with John McQuilton in July 1992, I subsequently completed an MA(Hons) thesis on the Camden Red Cross under his supervision in 1996.

My interest in the Camden Women's Voluntary Services is an extension of that earlier work. My research has always been conducted on a part-time basis from my own resources, supplemented by small research grants from the University of Wollongong. The long gestation of this research has allowed me to refine my research and writing skills, and develop a sound theoretical framework for the thesis.

I would like to thank the assistance of Camden Historical Society and their extensive holdings of local material. I would particularly like to thank Mark Smith from the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, Abingdon, United Kingdom, who gave me access to valuable material about the founder of the Service, Stella Reading. Other organisations that deserve mention are the Mitchell and Dixson Libraries, Sydney, the Archives Authority of New South Wales, Kingswood, Archives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, Parramatta, particularly Mary McPherson, the Sydney Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Camden Area Family History Society, the Oaks Historical Society, the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society and Camden Library. I am grateful to Rosemary Montgomery, and John and Julie Wrigley, who read early drafts of the thesis and offered their advice. Many Camden 'locals' also made a positive contribution to my research by providing their time, their memories and their life experiences. These individuals provided many leads and inspiration to persevere, particularly one correspondent who thought the whole project a 'complete waste of time', but needless to say, continued to answer my many inquiries.

My supervisor John McQuilton has provided guidance, astute advice and sympathetic encouragement. I would like to thank him for his patience, incisive comments and support over the life of this project.

To my wife Marilyn, I offer my thanks. Without her patience, support and encouragement this thesis would not have been completed. To my children, Micheal and Katherine, who have grown up with this project and the constant expectation that Dad is always doing his 'uni work'. To many friends, colleagues and other family members on the fringe of this project, thank you for your support and advice.

INTRODUCTION

W.V.S.

The W.V.S. held their first meeting during May, 1939 - their last, on 6th December, 1945 - 6 years and 7 months.

Miss Faithfull Anderson became Patroness, Miss Grace Moore was Hon. Secretary and Mrs Larkin was Treasurer for the first Treasurer for the first 6 months, when Mrs. Terry took her place. Mrs. De Saxe became Treasurer at the beginning of 1942.

In conjunction with the Camden Council the W.V.S. raised £500 to purchase a Mobile Canteen for England.

Each Wednesday several members, amongst whom were Mrs. Huthnance, Mrs. Driscoll, Mrs. Moreing, Mrs Pattison and Mrs Dickenson, have visited Narellan Camp to mend and sew for soldiers.

Mrs. Huthnance has handed in by the sale of waste paper £224/2/4, and £37/1/1 by the sale of scrap-iron.

Mrs Evans, one of our vice-presidents, has been responsible for the despatch of 972 pairs of socks to servicemen - the wool being donated by members.

Mrs. Mackie - surely a record - has made 3,000 pots of jam for sale at a weekly stall she held for us.

Mrs. G. Burnell will always be remembered for her untiring effort in providing afternoon tea for the workers.

I wish to place on record my sincere thanks to Mr. Gibson for great help by supplying the names and continually changing addresses of servicemen, and who, by his Wartime Plan, has raised £250.

Also the W.V.S. have responded to all appeals for help from the Merchant Navy, Sailor's Day, A.C.F. Appeal, the Gowrie Scholarship Fund, Food for Britain, and nearer home, Camden Hospitality Centre and Anzac House.

Our Sub. Centres, Menangle and Douglas Park, have given regular financial support.

Also regular subscriptions have been received from various groups throughout the district.

Thanks are due to the business people of the town who helped us to obtain goods.

Our members have given splendid service; especially are thanks due to Miss Grace Moore and Mrs. De Saxe.

-ZOE M. CROOKSTON.¹

This was the final report of the Camden WVS published in the local press. Although it fails to list all the activities undertaken by the Camden WVS, it is illustrative of the patriotic effort that was part of the ideology of service of these, and other women, who were active in female philanthropy throughout Australia during the Second World War. It is a relatively short document considering the impact the Camden WVS had both directly, and indirectly, on the community, and only hints at the level of dedication to duty and self sacrifice that was practised by these women.

The thesis is a local study which examines the relationships between the Camden community and war through the activities of one of Camden's wartime voluntary organisation, the Camden WVS, an organisation that was specifically formed to meet the needs of the Second World War.

The majority of works in Australian history tend to be written at the general level. Local studies can present a microcosm that allows the researcher 'to test arguments presented in the general literature... and often provides some of the building blocks for the historian interested in the general picture'.² This thesis follows that line of argument. It is an empirical study that observes and analyses the social interactions of a community in a particular place and its methodology tests the conclusions drawn by the generalists which in turn modifies the general literature. It also provides another one of the 'building blocks' of studies of wartime voluntarism in Australia, which have already been provided by Peel, Pennay, Stanley, Oppenheimer and others.³

In rural Australia voluntary organisations have played an important role in the history and development of communities, and have traditionally been strong supporters of Australia's military efforts on the homefront. War has helped define

¹ *Camden News* 20 December 1945

² McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War*, pp.2-3.

³ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*; Peel, *Voluntary War Effort*; Pennay, *From Country Town to Provincial City*; Stanley, 'Don't let Whyalla Down'; de Matos, 'When the War Came to Campbelltown'.

the identity and subjectivity of individuals, their communities and their voluntary organisations. As well war has influenced a range of other issues related to rural life, including interpretations of class, gender expectations, social authority, parochialism, social networks, conservatism and the general nature of the homefront. Yet, there are few wartime studies of a specific voluntary organisation created by the demands of the Second World War in a particular rural community which examine the relationship between the voluntary organisation, the community from which it was formed and the social relations within it during the Second World War.

Taksa has identified the importance of such studies. The author defines 'community' in terms of 'bonds and networks' and the 'social threads which tie people together'. The author argues that that these bonds and networks are 'essential for dealing with the often dire material and social straits' which are generated by crises such as war. More importantly the argues that

a critical event, such as a war... can be helpful starting point for a historical analysis of community because it creates a context for the 'social dramas' in which people participated.⁴

This approach , and the use of the WVS, allows the thesis to concentrate on the different social bonds and networks in Camden, analyse their relative strengths and evaluate the 'impact of external forces... which caused social networks to cohere or fragment'.⁵

Within any community individuals take on roles and positions in society based on wealth, class, education, occupation and other factors. These roles determine a person's status, prestige and social authority within the community's social structure. These individuals create bonds and networks which are the life-blood of the community. An examination of the activities and membership of the Camden WVS allows a detailed examination of these social processes, as well as an examination of the interactions and close networks between the leading members of the community who functioned as a powerful clique. The small size of Camden, its closed nature and its relative isolation allows the identification, description and analysis of the role of key individuals and their social relationships. These relationships exhibited

⁴ Lucy Taksa, 'Defining the Field', in Community History Program, *History and Communities*, p. 16.
⁵ *ibid.*

elements of both pre-industrial and Victorian society and were based on identifiable class groupings, social networks, gender relations and locational factors.

Camden was chosen because it extends earlier research on Camden's wartime voluntarism, which examined the Camden branch of the Red Cross.⁶ That research explored the concept of the Camden community, the construction of a regional identity and 'sense of place', the social structure of the region, and then proceeded to analyse these social process through the foundation of the Camden Red Cross and its major activities, as well as the activities of a number of branches that were formed in surrounding villages. That research analysed the role and influence of the Red Cross within the town and district with respect to gender, social networks, class, religion, status and power. This work quickly demonstrated that voluntarism in Camden during the Second World War spread far beyond the Red Cross and involved organisations established to meet the specific needs of the period from 1939 to 1945. One option for a study could have been a general overview of wartime voluntary organisations. The Camden homefront included organisations in the area of national security, civil defence, emergency and welfare services, the provision of war materials and the fund raising to support these causes (the principal organisations in these areas are listed in the appendices). So why the WVS? A general study of all these organisations would not have allowed a closer analysis of Taksa's argument⁷ and would have ignored one significant element in the history of Camden's wartime voluntarism – women made up the great majority of Camden's citizens involved in voluntary work.

This raised a number of questions. Why were women the majority? Why did they devote so much of their time to the voluntary organisations? Was volunteering shaped by notions of gender, class, religion, social networks, status and power? What were the origins of this commitment to voluntarism? The WVS provided answers to these questions.

Although the WVS did not raise the most funds nor boast the largest membership (both honours belonged to the Red Cross), it was the most influential of any of the voluntary organisations, both male and female, spawned by the war. The Red Cross had been founded in 1914, and continued its activities in the inter-war years,

⁶ Willis, War and Community.

⁷ Lucy Taksa, 'Defining the Field', in Community History Program, *History and Communities*, p. 16

broadening the experience of its membership and its activities to meet the requirements of peacetime. It would also continue its work after the end of the Second World War. The Red Cross had the flexibility to adapt itself to the needs and demands of war then just as quickly change to meet the challenges of peacetime. In New South Wales the WVS was established specifically to meet the demands of war and closed its operations at the end of the war.

The Camden WVS was a manifestation of the changed conditions leading up to the Second World War, the life experience of its founders and the women who volunteered to join it. The WVS used the existing ideologies in Camden (service ideology and rural ideology) and became the most successful wartime organisation in the town. It was the only organisation that continued its wartime activities for the entire duration of the war and remained focused on its wartime aims until its closure. Unlike, for example, the National Emergency Services, which started to wind down its operations after 1943. The WVS also illustrated female agency in Camden, how women exercised independent decision making through active wartime citizenship. No one has ever examined how these processes operated in a specific voluntary organisation in a country town.

Part of the continuity that contributed to the creation of the WVS were the close cultural and emotional links between Camden and Great Britain that began with the Macarthur family in the early nineteenth century. Camden saw itself as a 'little England' and the WVS used this feeling to great effect during the war, stressing notions of 'home' and a shared sense of identity and place with Britain. These cultural links were fostered by the Macarthur women, Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow and her daughter, Sibella, of which more will be said later. The world that these women created in Camden, and encouraged others to copy, has best been described by Crowley.

In one respect they were conscious of being citizen subjects of the British Empire, and sharing a sentiment of racial kinship with the people of Britain, they were also pleased to share in the reflected glory on an Empire which safeguard their country's existence. In another respect they were vaguely loyal to their own birthplace, or to their adopted country, and sensed that being Australian was different from being a resident of the British Isles.⁸

⁸ FK Crowley, '1901-14', in Crowley, *A New History of Australia*, pp. 161-2.

Crowley was referring to the time of Federation, but these values and attitudes in Camden lingered on into the 1930s and 1940s. Elizabeth and Sibella Macarthur Onslow possessed a significant amount of social authority in Camden based on their wealth and education, which they exercised from their power base at *Camden Park*. They felt that wealth brought with it obligations of duty and service, *noblesse oblige*, and they acted accordingly, like the British Victorian philanthropists that they attempted to be. They were influential in, and patrons of, a number of philanthropic organisations in the town and this tradition continued with the foundation of the WVS in 1939. The WVS was derivative of this process, not apart from it, and was subject to the same cultural and ethical traditions that shaped social relationships and processes in the town. Yet it was still able to create its own identity within Camden's female philanthropy.

The voluntary organisations within Camden's female philanthropy, including the WVS, did not seek to compete with each other. Instead, they were characterised by overlapping membership, inter-organisational co-operation, conservatism, Protestantism, leadership by a female clique from the gentry and upper middle class and a decentralised branch network that allowed for local independence. As well, parochialism (localism) was an important part of the ideology that underpinned the identity of these organisations.

Camden's female philanthropy, and the organisations within it, had an ideology of service based on a voluntary service ethos, which had its origins in British Victorian female philanthropy. Local women who joined these organisations had a strong sense of self-sacrifice, dedication to duty, patriotism and imperial nationalism. These organisations attracted, and depended on, middle class women socialised in Victorian notions of service, 'ideals of dependence', a 'separatedness of spheres'⁹, patriarchy, the status quo, and by the inter-war period, modernity. These women saw their wartime volunteering as contributing to the defence of the nation, as much as it was an act of altruism. The activities undertaken by these women, such as sewing and knitting, were not new to Camden and had been a traditional part of women's wartime voluntarism. This was also part of the continuity of traditions that contributed to the formation of the WVS in Camden.

⁹ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in England*, pp. 6-8.

The major themes within the thesis appeared as research progressed and were continually refined throughout the development of the thesis. From the beginning of the project it was clear that Camden's wartime experience had a number of recurring themes. They were constantly in the background, part of Camden's 'cultural wallpaper', always assumed and never specifically referred to. Even in the oral historical material collected they were rarely mentioned. Distilling their essence provided a cultural context for the WVS. These can be summed up as Camden's rural ideology, which had a significant influence on the operations of both the community and the WVS. It also needs to be noted that the thesis does not claim to be feminist history. As a predominantly women's organisation, any study of the WVS needs to acknowledge relevant feminist issues and the thesis relies on the work of feminist historians (and others), but its principal focus is the analysis of the women of the Camden WVS between 1939 and 1945.

As a local study the thesis relies mainly on local sources. Two of the most important were the local newspapers, the *Camden News* and the *Camden Advertiser*. They were sources for news, information and local gossip. They revealed the views of Camden's leading citizens towards the war, the 'Britishness' of Camden, the town's rural ideology and the prejudices of their owners. They also helped create and reinforce Camden's sense of identity and the locals' sense of place.

A rich collection of local material is held by the Camden Historical Society. Although the collection is mostly uncatalogued, it is a storehouse of reminiscences, file notes, newspaper clippings, memorabilia, photographs, maps and ephemera related to Camden. It also holds the minutes of many local organisations including the WVS and Country Women's Association (CWA). As Garden has noted these collections are 'custodians of an enormous wealth of our cultural heritage'.¹⁰

Oral historical material linked the memories of those who experienced war with local events and provided a personal view of events that does not appear in contemporary written sources. Much valuable information was forthcoming from many local people who were reluctant, for a host of reasons, to put their thoughts and

¹⁰ Garden, 'Making Links', pp. 12-13.

experiences in writing. As Kunek has argued, oral history and collective memory come to the fore in times of crisis, especially war.¹¹ They also recount personal tragedy and the emotional trauma that comes with war. The bare written record may account for the reasons Patricia Fraser participated in the war effort but not the anguish that accompanied it (see Chapter 10).

Local historical publications provided another source of information, particularly those that listed members of organisations, places and events. Personal memoirs were also used, as were histories of local organisations and personalities. Many are self published and written by keen amateurs but remain an invaluable source of information and often clarified the intricacies of local social networks.

The archival collections held by the Mitchell and Dixson libraries provided the minutes of the New South Wales WVS, and records of the CWA and the Sydney YMCA. The Archives Authority of New South Wales held government wartime directives, instructions and letters that affected the homefront effort in Camden as well as the correspondence from the New South Wales Agent General in London. The Sydney YMCA's archives were also important for the analysis of their activities in Camden during the war. The British Royal Women's Voluntary Services provided material on its wartime activities, and its founder and its chairman, Lady Stella Isaacs Reading (Stella Reading) [1894-1971].¹²

Structure

The thesis begins with an examination of the literature and historiography related to the topic. It is followed by an overview of Camden on the eve of war, the formation of the WVS in Britain and subsequently New South Wales. It then examines activities publicly associated with the WVS in Camden and then looks at other wartime activities in the town that were influenced by the presence of the WVS in

^{11.} Srebenka Kunek, Address, Camden Museum, 12 March 2002.

^{12.} Lady Stella Isaacs Reading, nee Charnoud, Baroness Swanborough, The Dowager Marchioness of Reading. For the purposes of the thesis will be referred to as Stella Reading. This is how she signed herself in the forward to Reading, Voluntary Service. Her personal papers are lodged at The Women's Library, London, 7/SRE. <<http://www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk>> [accessed 3 July 2002]. Reading always referred to herself as chairman and even couched her descriptions of both her position and the nature of voluntarism in the masculine sense. See Graves, *Women in Green*; Reading, *Voluntary Service*.

the town, and as well as a number of activities that used WVS volunteers. This is followed by a case study of two individuals involved in Camden's salvage effort and explains the failure of the efforts on the part of one and the success of the other in terms of the service ideology. It ends with the summing up and distillation of the WVS volunteering experience in wartime Camden.

Chapter One provides an examination of the literature and the wider historical context of the issues raised in the thesis, particularly those surrounding local studies in wartime, as well as gender, philanthropy and volunteering. As well it defines a number of key concepts used in the thesis, most notably rural ideology and the ideology of service.

Chapter Two provides a brief overview of Camden's historical development, the major social and cultural factors which affected the Camden WVS and the general progress of the war. These provide the historical, social and cultural context in which the WVS operated. The chapter also briefly discusses Camden's class structure, Camden's female elite, social networks, conservatism and parochialism.

Chapter Three deals with the British origins of the WVS, its organisational character, and the role of its founder Stella Reading in the development of its service ideology. The chapter also deals with the adoption of the WVS by the female elite in New South Wales, as well as the impotency of the state executive of the WVS.

The foundation of the Camden WVS Centre by the New South Wales female elite is covered in Chapter Four. The chapter explores the dominant role and influence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, and demonstrates that the foundation of the WVS was subject to the elements of Victorian female philanthropy and the social constraints of Camden's rural ideology. The discussion shows that Camden women, like their equivalents elsewhere, wanted to be part of the war effort and to express their patriotism through active citizenship.

Chapter Five deals with the implementation of the service ideology through the activities of the Camden Centre in the early part of the war. The chapter illustrates that WVS female volunteers saw a direct link between volunteering, domesticity and

patriotism, with the primary aim of assisting the national interest. The discussion also analyses the reasons for the co-operation between the WVS and the Red Cross in Camden, how this strengthened the position of the WVS, and how the WVS activities reflected the existing class divisions in Camden.

The most important wartime activity of the Camden WVS is covered in Chapter Six, the manufacture, purchase and distribution of soldier comforts. The chapter will outline and assess the importance of soldier comforts in the overall patriotic effort of the Camden WVS, showing again, the direct link between wartime volunteering and patriotism. The central theme of the discussion is the comforts programme, but the chapter also explores the role of parochialism and the importance of 'thank you' letters from servicemen.

Inter-organisational co-operation is again explored in Chapter Seven. The chapter shows that the wartime success of the Camden WVS was partly due to many the similarities in the voluntary ethos of the WVS and CWA and how this was derivative of the service ideology of British philanthropy. The discussion also explores the influence and guidance provided by the CWA at the state and local level. The chapter examines the competition for leadership of the voluntary ethic in Camden and provides an interesting example of how personal rivalries could affect the expression of a service ideology.

Chapters Eight and Nine discuss the role of the Camden WVS in the wider community, especially with respect to Camden's male voluntarism. Chapter Eight examines a number of activities that were organised by Camden men after the defeat at Dunkirk: the Soldier's Recreation Room, soldier's farewells and Arthur Gibson's support of the WVS through the *Camden Advertiser*. These activities illustrated the differences between male and female voluntarism, how the women's service ideology infiltrated the broader community and the moral influence the WVS came to command in Camden.

The Young Men's Christian Association-Australian Comforts Fund [YMCA-ACF] Hospitality Centre, which is discussed in Chapter Nine, illustrated the complex, dynamic nature of Camden's wartime philanthropy and volunteering. Key themes discussed include the vacuum caused by the death of Sibella Macarthur Onslow

amongst the elite, Camden's conservatism and its reaction to the abuse of alcohol, the sexualisation and 'agency' of Camden women who volunteered at the Centre, and the role of 'outsiders' in the foundation and operation of the Centre, particularly the presence of Royal Air Force (RAF) airmen.

Chapter Ten provides a case study of the implementation of the service ideology through the role of the activities of two principal individuals in Camden's salvage effort, Ben Young and Irene Huthnance. Their salvage efforts illustrated the personal sacrifice associated with the voluntary service commitment of the WVS, and provides a microcosm of the service ideology and many of the issues raised in the thesis.

The Conclusion distils the essence of volunteering for the WVS, and in doing so, teases out the main threads of Camden's wartime experience. It unravels some of the intricacies and subtleties that make up the social relationships, that were the essence of 'community', and examines the role of key individuals within these social processes. It draws together the homefront experience of one voluntary organisation in an Australian country town.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The historiography sets out the general literature surrounding the two main themes presented in the thesis which are, a local study of a country town (Camden) on the Australian homefront, and secondly, the role of female volunteering and philanthropy, specifically the WVS. There are also a number of inter-related sub-themes, which revolve around class, gender expectations, social authority, parochialism, social networks, and conservatism. Within a community all of these create a complex set of 'bonds and networks' that form the social structure of a country town.

The chapter will also define a number of concepts that recur throughout the thesis, particularly, rural ideology and service ideology. This provides additional clarity and ensures that the discussion is not complicated by unnecessary explanation and repetition of definitions.

Local studies and the Australian homefront

The term local studies is vague, ill-defined and covers a broad area of research. Local studies can include whole communities, which can be small or large, urban or non-urban. Local studies can be quite specific and focus on one part of a community, a particular organisation or neighbourhood, or even individuals. These studies cut across a range of disciplines including history, sociology, economics, geography, public affairs, media, psychology, medicine, business studies, and a range of others. Local studies often include works of fiction, poetry, drama and music. Academics, journalists, keen amateurs and a host of others, producing a bank of writing and research that ranges from indifferent to high quality, have undertaken local studies. The one common element amongst this assortment is that they are all about

communities of one sort or another, the social relationship within them, and their sphere of influence.

The concept of 'community', which has been explored in the Master's research, will refer here to the examination of a small community with an identifiable character, a sense of place and some geographic, economic, social and cultural cohesion. All communities have a sphere of influence over which they exert a degree of control that makes up the community's hinterland. This area can be either a functional region based on some economic criteria, an arbitrary district drawn from a political boundary, an area based on a geographic feature, such as a river basin, or an imagined area associated with an individual's sense of place.

This local study of Camden includes the township of Camden (see attached map) and the surrounding district, the boundary of which has been determined by a combination of economic, social and geographic criteria. The activities of the Camden WVS were centred on the Camden township but frequently extended into the surrounding area. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis the terms hinterland, region and district are used interchangeably and incorporate the township of Camden - although the township was, and remains, the central focus¹.

Local history is almost synonymous with local studies and Davison points out that local history is 'one of the most vigorous fields of historical activity in Australia'.² It is an area of research that is predominantly the province of keen amateurs, a few academic historians and researchers from other areas of the humanities, and Camden is no exception. Some early directories provide useful lists of local histories³, while Reid's historical directory of Australia lists over 1300 titles, most of which are published by small historical societies and local associations. The Camden Historical Society has been active in area for a number of years, along with a number of self-published efforts by local people.⁴

1. The limits of the Camden region are shown on the attached map and were defined in earlier research. Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 12-25.

2. Davison, 'Local History', in Davison, Hirst and McIntyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p. 397.

3. Other directories have included Beaumont, *Local History in Victoria*; Eslick, *Bibliography of New South Wales Local History*; Paterson, *From Yalata to the Mount*,

4. There are over 4000 entries for organisations that are currently active in the 'historical, genealogical or heritage matters'. Reid & Reid, *Into History*. For instance publications by Wrigley and Nixon.

There are many commissioned and self-published local studies, which are mostly narratives, such as studies of Milton, Braidwood, Boorowa and others.⁵ There seems to have been a reticence on the part of academic historians to engage this undervalued field of research, although there are a few scholarly studies of rural communities. Examples include Gammage's *Narrandera Shire*, Keating's social history of Liverpool and Liston's history of Campbelltown,⁶ and the award winning monographs by Ferry on Armidale and Atkinson's work on Camden.⁷ In recent times the relationship between local studies and labour history has been explored in *Labour History*, particularly with respect to the communities of the Blue Mountains, Broken Hill, Lithgow, Dungog, Port Kembla, Wagga Wagga and Ipswich.⁸

Local studies have always been strongly supported by historical societies, their journals, seminars and conferences, for example, the Royal Australian Historical Society, and in the case of this study, the Camden Historical Society.⁹ In the academic world the University of New South Wales sponsored the Local History Co-ordination Project after the Australian Bicentenary. This became the Community History Program, and later continued as the Centre for Community History.¹⁰ Recently the Australian Centre for Public History at the University of Technology, Sydney, has taken over publishing its journal *Locality*.¹¹

Local studies of communities in wartime is largely a study of the homefront and how local communities contributed to the maintenance of morale, especially amongst the troops. Many individuals in these communities devoted a considerable amount of their time and effort to patriotic activities and organisations that helped the war effort at home.

⁵ For instance, McAndrew, *Milton Ulladulla in the Wars*; Ellis, *Braidwood*; Lloyd, *Boorowa*; Bayley, *Condobolin*; Bayley, *Campbelltown*; Wyatt, *Goulburn*.

⁶ Gammage, *Narrandera Shire* and Keating, *On the Frontier*, Liston, *Campbelltown*.

⁷ Ferry, *Colonial Armidale*; Atkinson, *Camden*.

⁸ A special issue of *Labour History* had a thematic section on local history and labour history and included articles on Broken Hill, Lithgow, Dungog, Port Kembla, Wagga Wagga and Ipswich. *Labour History*, 78, May 2000. Also see, Wright, 'Brass Hats.. from Sydney'.

⁹ The Royal Australian Historical Society was founded in 1901 and the Society published the *Journal, History*, and also has an annual local history conference. The Camden Historical Society has recently started its own journal.

¹⁰ The Centre for Community History at the University of New South Wales has provided valuable perspectives on local studies through its journal, *Locality*, and has also conducted seminars.

¹¹ McCarthy, Hamilton, and Ashton, 'Editorial', p. 2.

The homefront is only one part of Australian military history, which only emerged as a discipline following the Second World War. Australian military history, which has been redefined during the last thirty years, was initially defined 'narrowly' in terms of 'strategy, tactics and battles'. The Vietnam War 'broadened' this interpretation when conscription sparked an interest in the homefront, and 'the experience of ordinary men and women'.¹² McKernan has identified 'three main approaches to the contemporary writing of Australian military history: a social-democratic model, inherited from Charles Bean; a "war and society" approach, derived from mainstream Australian social history; and a technical-analytical model, derived from an international perspective' which is sourced in Europe and the United States of America.¹³ The Australian homefront is part of McKernan's 'war and society' approach, and includes subsidiary themes such as war and gender, war and volunteering, studies of rural communities and their relationship to war, amongst others.¹⁴

The homefront takes in a broad range of activities and according to Fisher includes those 'wartime activities within Australia, other than those under military control, for the defence of the civilian population and for the general prosecution of the war'.¹⁵ Alternatively, Darian-Smith maintains that the homefront involved those issues that were 'concerned with the effect of specific conditions on political, economic and social institutions, and the social and cultural changes brought about directly or indirectly by war'.¹⁶ This thesis takes a combination of these definitions, and treats the homefront as those institutions under civilian control which assisted, directly or indirectly, the prosecution of the war. This definition encompasses all of the principle themes examined in the thesis and provides the broad framework for this work.

Published works on the homefront are a mixture of academic research, commissioned work and the work of keen amateurs. The earliest scholarly

¹² Reasons for this suggested by McQuilton were: Australian history only defined itself as a major discipline in its own right following the Second World War; for the scholars of this new historical tradition war was not part of the past it was part of their own experience; military history was narrowly defined as battles, tactics and strategy; and there was little understanding or appreciation of the Anzac Day 'homilies'. McQuilton, 'Teaching 'military history'.

¹³ McKernan, 'Military History', in Davison, Hirst and Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, pp. 429-430.

¹⁴ Scates has recently reviewed a number of publications in the area of 'war and society'. Scates, 'The Price of War', p. 134.

¹⁵ Joyce Fisher, 'The Homefront', in Chisholm, *The Australian Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 9, p. 490.

¹⁶ Darian-Smith, 'Inclusion: the home front', p. 20.

contributions were from Scott, then Hasluck and more recently Lake, Oliver, McKernan and Beaumont,¹⁷ while others refer to a particular aspect of the homefront, for example, Darian-Smith's study on the Melbourne homefront¹⁸ and Gregory's collection of articles on the homefront in Western Australia.¹⁹ Using a broad definition, other contributions to the literature on the homefront include work on regional studies²⁰, prisoners of war²¹, internment,²² army camps²³, fortifications²⁴, war trophies²⁵, war memorials,²⁶ evacuation,²⁷ mourning, memory and post-war trauma,²⁸ families²⁹ and others.

Homefront studies of country towns contribute to the construction of their identity and subjectivity, and examples include Townsville in 1942, Albury, Pemberton (Western Australia)³⁰ and a study of the North Eastern Victorian during the First World War.³¹ Other homefront studies cover specific events, such as the recruiting marches of the First World War.³² There is no research of this type in the general historiography of Camden.

One of the sub-themes in thesis is the examination of class and the related issues of social authority, status and power. There are a number of sociological studies of small communities where these have been analysed with respect of gender relations,

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- ¹⁷ Scott, *Australia During the War*, Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1939-1941*; Hasluck, *The Government and the People, 1942-1945*; Lake, *A Divided Society*; Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia*; McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, McKernan, *All In!*; Beaumont, *Australia's War 1914-1918*, Beaumont, *Australia's War 1939-45*.
- ¹⁸ Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*.
- ¹⁹ Gregory, *On the Homefront*.
- ²⁰ For instance, Charlton, *South Queensland, WWII*; Wilson, *North Queensland, WWII*.
- ²¹ For instance, Fitzgerald, *The Italian Farming Soldiers*; Simons, *Prisoners in Arcady*, Neil, *Trial Bay Gaol*; Asada, *Cowra*.
- ²² For instance, Fisher, *Enemy Aliens*; Splivalo, *The Home Fires*; Bevege, *Behind Barbed Wire*.
- ²³ For instance, Keating, *Greta, A History of the Army Camp*.
- ²⁴ For instance, Horry Limon, *Magnetic Is Forts*; Southall, *The Defence of Lithgow*.
- ²⁵ For instance, Billett, *War Trophies*.
- ²⁶ For instance Inglis, *Sacred Places*.
- ²⁷ For instance Reeson, *A Very Long War*.
- ²⁸ For instance Garton, *The Cost of War*, Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*; Damousi, *Living With the Aftermath*; Muir, *The Hidden Cost of War*.
- ²⁹ Lewis, *Our War*, Morice, *Six-Bob-a-Day Tourists*; Arnold, *Letters Home 1939-1945*.
- ³⁰ Examples of these include: McIntyre, *Townsville At War 1942*; Pennay, *On the Home Front*; Gay Eivers, 'Pemberton Goes To War', in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, pp. 12-18.
- ³¹ McQuilton, 'Doing the 'Back Block Boys Some Good'; McQuilton, 'Enlistment for the First World War in rural Australia'; McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War*.
- ³² There are self-published efforts such as McAndrew, *Milton Ulladulla in the Wars*; alternatively they recounted specific events that occurred in the area, for example, Clark, *The Waratahs*; Hetherington, 'The Kangaroos march'; and Meredith, *The Coo-ee March*.

volunteering and a number of related issues. Examples include Cessnock, country towns in Victoria, Marulan, Rylstone, Kandos, Bradstow, Cowra, Richmond, Smalltown, Newtown and in Camden, a social survey undertaken by the University of Sydney and the work of Mason. Connell and Irving's *Class Structure in Australian History* maintains that 'class analysis is concerned with the large-scale dynamics of society and the long-term dynamic of history' and defines class as a 'social dynamic', which they maintain is 'a kind of historical process, in which a social world is transformed'. There is a recognition in this thesis, in line with the concerns of Connell and Irving, that 'the study of class in history is *the class order as a whole*'. This involves the recognition of a class consciousness, a recognition that there are regional differences in class formation from the 'colony to metropole', that the dynamics of class interacts with other social dynamics 'such as the dynamic of gender' and that 'classes are created in history'.³³ This is also evident in the treatment of class in works by Atkinson, Ferry, Bolton and Russell.³⁴

The interpretation of class used in this thesis revolves around the functional theories of stratification, which according to Encel, suggest that class divisions are necessary and natural. Social stratification is associated with the satisfaction of an individual's 'drives and needs', which in turn depend on 'social structure and its hierarchy of values'. This is based on a system of 'units' or variables such as 'occupation, religion, and racial origin'.³⁵ Mason's work on Camden followed this approach where he tested the 'conceptual model of the organisation of society in terms of social classes'. The author maintained that 'the basic unit in social-class structure may be thought of as the individual or as the family', and that families assigned to various classes would have differences based on prestige and their participation in voluntary organisations.³⁶ This approach suits the study of social relationships that resulted from an organisation, such as the WVS, within a discrete time frame, like the Second World War.

Parochialism is one of the sub-themes of this thesis and is a characteristic of many rural communities. It is often referred to in academic literature as localism, which Patmore has defined as 'a sense of place which can influence behaviour'. He maintains that it is based on 'economic' and 'social infrastructure' which is 'built on

³³ Connell and Irving, *Class Structure in Australian History*, pp. 6-14.

³⁴ Atkinson, *Camden*; Ferry, *Colonial Armidale*; Bolton, 'The Idea of a Colonial Gentry'; Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*.

³⁵ Encel, *Equality and Authority*, p. 11.

³⁶ Mason, *Carinya*, pp. 40-42.

family, neighbourhood, work and social interaction within a particular space'. He further claims that 'these networks build familiarity and dependence, providing a basis for movements, which may either boost local interests or defend a local way of life against outsiders'.³⁷ Localism has been explored in *Labour History* by Wright, Patmore, Taksa, Bowden and Ekland, and more recently in *Third Sector Review* by Barraket.³⁸ Parochialism and localism are the same social phenomena. The thesis takes Patmore's definition and extends it to include petty provincialism, 'parish pump' issues, self-interest and animosity towards 'outsiders', which are all part of the same social process. These factors combine to make rural towns closed communities and contribute to the construction of their identity and subjectivity, and what Thomis claims is a 'historical consciousness of the locality'.³⁹

In Camden parochialism was quite pronounced, especially when the community was faced with decisions made by 'outsiders', who have been defined by Patmore as individuals who 'may challenge localism by making decisions on the basis of a national rather than local economy and ignoring local custom and practice'.⁴⁰ The thesis will show that in Camden 'outsiders' increased the sense of localism by often attempting to arbitrarily impose city-based decisions with respect to wartime needs. This offended local sensibilities and often stifled the implementation of national wartime aims in the district. McQuilton has also examined this issue in his study of Northeastern Victoria.⁴¹

The sense of place is also an integral part of the creation of parochialism and regional loyalties. Read, Breen, Hope, Modjeska, and a recent issue of *Locality* have examined people's attachment to place.⁴² As well Teather has examined the relationship between place, voluntary organisations and identity,⁴³ and Reeson has studied the relationship between the attachment to place and the experience of war.⁴⁴ Following these themes the thesis examines soldiers' 'thank you' letters to the

^{37.} Patmore, 'Localism and Industrial Conflict', pp. 57-8.

^{38.} Patmore, 'Working Lives in Regional Australia', pp. 1-6; Patmore, 'Localism and Labour'; Wright, 'Brass Hats... from Sydney'; Taksa, 'Like a Bicycle'; Bowden, 'Changing Community Loyalties in Ipswich'; Ekland, 'The Place' of Politics'; Barraket, 'Marginal Voices'.

^{39.} Thomis, 'Blackall', p. 29. For a further discussion of this issue see West, 'Writing Regional History,' pp. 306-308.

^{40.} Patmore, 'Localism and Industrial Conflict', pp. 57-8.

^{41.} For example see McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War.*, pp. 48, 54, 77, 93.

^{42.} Read, *Returning to Nothing*; Read, *Belonging*; Breen, *Contested Places*; Deborah Hope, 'Home, There's Still No Place Like It', *The Australian Magazine*, 14 December 1996; Modjeska, *Inner Cities*; *Locality*, *The Community History Magazine*, Autumn, 2001.

^{43.} Teather, 'Voluntary Organisations as Agents in the Becoming of Place'.

^{44.} Reeson, *A Very Long War*. Reeson uses oral history interviews as the basis of her work.

Camden WVS, and their expression of attachment to place and 'home' through the soldier comforts program. Similar sentiments have been expressed in dairies, letters and other types of reminiscences, written and oral, that have been used as sources for the thesis. These types of documents allowed the writers 'to assert their own importance and construct an identity for themselves'. Russell argues that their literary style provides a glimpse into the writer's education, self-confidence, their social position and their perception of their place in the world.⁴⁵ The letters from RAF airmen, which are examined in Chapter Nine, certainly do this and provide valuable insights into the personal lives of those who experienced wartime Camden.

Similarly, oral history serves a similar role and is responsible for the inter-generational transmission of personal memory and 'social or collective rememberings'.⁴⁶ Published work in this area includes reminiscences of individual's experiences that combine memory and war in rural communities,⁴⁷ recollections of the Australian homefront, with at least one being the basis of a television series,⁴⁸ and scholarly research on the meaning of war and memory.⁴⁹ The wartime memories of members of the Camden community are an integral part of the history of the Camden WVS, and many interviews have been conducted in the compilation of this thesis. They are all listed in the footnotes.

Rural and provincial newspapers, and in some areas, rural radio stations provided extensive coverage of the local homefront in country towns. This medium acted as agents of change, carrying advertisements of the latest fashions from the city, but as well they were a source of continuity through their support of rural conservatism. The rural media were the 'heart and soul' of these small communities⁵⁰, as they were in Camden. Consequently this thesis has made extensive use of local newspapers. Despite their importance there are only a small number of authoritative studies on the New South Wales rural press,⁵¹ although keen amateurs have published

⁴⁵ Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, p. 62.

⁴⁶ Darian-Smith & Hamilton, *Memory and History*, pp. 3-5.

⁴⁷ For instance, Davis, *Dapto Oral History*; Brooks & Burke *The Heart of a Place*; Luckett, *Between the River and the Railway*; Clarke, *Oaks and Folks*; Baker, Barty, Gow, Norris & Sutherland, *Eden and the Second World War*; the Oral History Association of Australia lists oral history projects that are specific to wartime and various communities, for instance, *Journal*, 15, 1993, and 17, 1995.

⁴⁸ Goldsmith & Sandford, *The Girls They Left Behind*; Connors, Finch, Saunders, and Taylor, *Australia's Frontline*; Penglase & Horner, *When The War Came To Australia* and the related television programme.

⁴⁹ For instance, Darian-Smith & Hamilton, *Memory and History*, which has one chapter on the Second World War and the homefront; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*.

⁵⁰ Sommerlad, *Serving the Country Press*, p. ix.

⁵¹ Kirkpatrick, *Country Conscience*; Walker, *The Newspaper Press*; Walker, *Yesterday's News*;

collections of wartime extracts from provincial newspapers.⁵² (None of these have been from the Camden area.) The combination of these types of sources with the minutes of local organisations, such as the WVS and CWA (which were incomplete), are important because 'they identify the relationships between people and the ways which they are interconnected... and provide insight into the issues which concerned members of a community.'⁵³ They constantly highlight 'family life and social networks',⁵⁴ which were important parts of Camden's social structure and crucial to an examination of the Camden WVS.

A local study of any rural community needs to examine the 'social glue' that gives these communities their identifiable character. Rural identity and subjectivity separates these communities from the metropolis, although writers like Neutze claim that there are more similarities than differences.⁵⁵ The nature and social cohesion of rural communities has been examined by many scholars, and was the subject of a special edition of *Australian Cultural History* based on the theme of country, town and city.⁵⁶ Much of the discourse surrounding rural life has British origins and was based on the social rejection of, and reaction to the Industrial Revolution. It has been discussed in sources such as Williams' *The Country and the City* and Davidoff's *World's Between*. Davidoff claims that under the influence of rural idyll, 'it was taken for granted that real communities could only be found in the English countryside... [and that] the organic community was the epitome of the stable social hierarchy which the Victorian upper and middle class wished to preserve, or, where it had been disrupted by the intrusion of industrial and urban growth'.⁵⁷ Davidoff argues that the rural idyll was an attempt by the Victorian upper and middle classes to 're-create' conditions of a pre-industrial society where 'deference and paternalism were the norm'. She maintains that the constant change during the nineteenth century created a 'desire for stability' in the face of 'commercial capitalism' and the 'egalitarianism and liberty of the French Revolution'.⁵⁸ Some went further than this and dreamed of 'the Empire as an extension of the English country town [which captured] the essence of natural life'.⁵⁹

Sommerlad, *Serving the Country Press*; and Sommerlad, 'A Century of Service to the Country Press,' and a number of related articles in the same issue of *History*.

52. Sheridan, *Cohuna District*, Barber, *Wimmera Diggers At War*; Gow & Gow, *North Coast Anzacs, Vol 1*; Gow & Gow, *North Coast Anzacs, Vol 2*; Gow & Gow, *Boer War*, Gow, Gow & Birch, *Hawkesbury Heroes, Vol 1*; Gow, Gow & Birch, *Hawkesbury Heroes, Vol 2*.

53. Lucy Taksa, 'Defining the Field', in Community History Program, *History and Communities*, p. 17.

54. Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, p. 42.

55. Neutze, 'City, Country, Town', p. 17.

56. *Australian Cultural History*, 4, 1985.

57. Davidoff, *World's Between*, p. 46.

58. Davidoff, *World's Between*, p. 43.

59. Waller, *Town, City and Nation*, p. 213.

Poiner states that this convention was not confined to Britain and flourished 'as a necessary and primary consideration in the Australian rural scene'.⁶⁰ It found its expression in the early twentieth century as a political ideology, which Aitkin sees as

a system of values and ideas that among other things presents a more or less extensive picture of the good society, and of the policies and programmes necessary to achieve it; distinguishes goodies from baddies; accounts for the historical experience of a group; and appears as "truth" to that group while being at least plausible to outsiders. Ideologies, unlike philosophies, obtain their force very much from social experience; they cannot be proved wrong, partly because they are sufficiently elastic to accommodate awkward facts.⁶¹

This convention has been analysed in his discussion of 'countrymindedness' and his exploration of town and country, where 'rural pursuits' were seen as 'virtuous, ennobling and co-operative; they bring out the best in people', while in contrast 'city life is competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical'. Aitkin argues that

the characteristic Australian is a countryman, and the core elements of national character come from the struggles of country people to tame their environment and make it productive.⁶²

And so for these and other reasons 'people should be encouraged to settle in the country'.⁶³ This argument has been taken further in Neutze's exploration of 'ruralism' and the promotion of rural settlement, Walker's analysis of the 'agrarian myth' and the role of the country press, Kirkpatrick's examination of the 'country psychology' ('countrymindedness'), the rural press and the emergence of the Country Party and Poiner's analysis of 'rural ideology' in her study of Marulan.⁶⁴ Poiner maintains, that despite its British origins, rural settlement in Australia 'gave the local form of the idyll a peculiarly Australian colour'.⁶⁵ This rural convention was part of 'the rural ethos', that according to Teather was evident in the foundation of the CWA.⁶⁶ It is also evident in many of the sociological studies of rural communities, for instance,

⁶⁰ Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, p. 39.

⁶¹ Aitkin, 'Countrymindedness', p. 35.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ *ibid.*

Aitkin, 'Countrymindedness'; Neutze, 'City, Country, Town', p. 15; Walker, *Yesterday's News*, pp. 169-170; Kirkpatrick, *Country Conscience*, pp. 146-157; Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, pp. 39-45.

⁶⁵ Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, p. 39.

⁶⁶ Teather, 'Mandate of the Country Women's Association', pp. 82-85.

MacIntyre and MacIntyre's *Country Towns of Victoria*, other examples cited in this chapter, and much of the discourse that surrounds the mythology of the pioneer and 'bush legend', such as Ward's *Australian Legend* and Carroll's *Intruders In the Bush*.⁶⁷ Poiner goes further and argues that for country people,

their life circumstances, their social relations and their expectations, even when not necessarily flaunting rurality, are likely to be intimately tied up with processes directed by rural orientations and ideals.⁶⁸

She sums this up as 'rural ideology', where it 'characterizes attitudes and values of rural dwellers... as their beliefs are confirmed in the experiences of everyday life'. She argues that 'these views must therefore be included as important and distinctive factors in studies of rural areas'.⁶⁹ These factors were certainly evident in wartime Camden, amongst the respondents that were interviewed for the thesis, the attitudes expressed in the local press and the actions of local people. For the purposes of this thesis Poiner's use of term 'rural ideology' has been adopted.

Rural ideology was complex enough to include many elements, and for the purposes of this thesis it is taken to include the Victorian construction of gender based on separate spheres, and strong support for the family amongst middle-class women, within the confines of patriarchy.⁷⁰ It also includes notions of neighbourliness and localness, *gemeinschaft* type features, which were related to the intimacy of the district's social networks. Rugged independence and individualism of the frontier, which can be found in the bush legend⁷¹ and the ANZAC legend,⁷² can also be identified within this ideology. The innate conservatism of rural communities contributed to this ideology due to isolation, the limited life experience of individuals and the associated parochialism that developed with a regional identity and their sense of place. The social divisions within rural communities were part of this ideology and were based on status and prestige (class) as well as religion (sectarianism). As well, this ideology was dominated by Protestantism and an Anglo-centric view of the world based on the Britishness of the local population, and

⁶⁷ Ward, *Australian Legend*; Carroll, *Intruders in the Bush*.

⁶⁸ Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, p. 43.

⁶⁹ Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, p. 51.

⁷⁰ See Parker, *For The Family's Sake*.

⁷¹ Eleanor Hodges, 'The Bushman Legend', and JB Hirst, 'The Pioneer Legend', in Carroll, *Intruders in the Bush*, pp. 3-13, 14-37; Ward, *The Australian Legend*, pp. 1-2.

⁷² Bill Gammage, 'Anzac', in Carroll, *Intruders in the Bush*, pp. 54-56; Thomson, *Anzac Memories*, pp. 43-45.

their loyalty to the 'mother' country through nationalism and patriotism.⁷³ These elements were all present in the social and cultural character of wartime Camden.

Rural ideology has had an important influence in the shaping of rural relationships, the creation of a rural identity and the subjectivity of the rural population. Camden residents organised their lives in the belief that they thought or perceived that they were different from city dwellers. It was part of their community identity. It was evident in their language (modes of address), their attitudes (their response to people from outside the town, parochialism, conservatism, 'outsiders' versus 'locals'), the nature of interpersonal relationships (the frequency of personal contacts, intimacy, notions of reciprocity and trust, *gesellschaft*, *gemeinschaft*, gender expectations), the structure of interpersonal relations (social stratification, social authority, social status, patriarchy), the nature of kinship relations (family linkages), their values systems (the importance of land, pride, independence) and location (attachment to place, residence, daily movement and access to services, isolation).

This ideology is central to any local study of rural communities. It is the 'wall-paper' mentioned in the Introduction that is constantly present in all research conducted on rural areas. It is not well understood, and research has been selective. Rural ideology incorporates all aspects of the principle themes of this thesis and many other related areas that are beyond its scope.

No ideology is rigid or monolithic and all encompass a range of views and even rival traditions. Rural ideology has been subject to change as its basic principles have been applied to changing historical circumstances. There is nevertheless an underlying coherence and unity at the heart of rural ideology in the form of a fundamental commitment to its importance and to the principles that flow from it. The moral and ideological stance of rural ideology is embodied in a commitment to a distinctive set of values and beliefs, even when it changes. It is a conservative ideology that has been considered a natural part of rural life. It has provided stability, security and predictability for the daily relationships between people and the events that make up their lives. These characteristics have allowed individuals within rural communities the freedom to explore the influence of outside values,

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See Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, pp. 30-52; Dempsey, *Smalltown*, pp. 28-53; Gray, *Politics in Place*, pp. 17-23; Wild, *Bradstow*, pp. 31-34; Aitkin, 'Countrymindedness'; Margaret Alston, *Women on the Land*, pp. 142-47; Teather, 'Mandate of the Country Women's Association'; Cole, "Nationalism" and "Imperialism".

such as the desires and aspirations of modernity, without endangering their own social position. This ideology is a mirror of the lifestyles of rural communities, and the values and attitudes of the participants in those lifestyles. This ideology, its traditions and doctrines, its iconography and symbolism are intangible, and are therefore hard to assess in any meaningful, measurable way. In essence, it is a belief system that according to rural people is, 'just there'.

Female volunteering and philanthropy

Female volunteering and philanthropy involves issues surrounding volunteering, voluntarism, philanthropy, charity, as well as social welfare and social work, through both formal and informal structures and networks. One of the principle themes of the thesis is female volunteering and philanthropy and the historiography will discuss a number of issues related to it. It will commence by defining a number of concepts, then move to a general overview of women voluntary organisations, including the WVS. The discussion will then examine the development of women's notion of service and service ideology within British philanthropy, and how this relates to wartime volunteering, imperial motherhood, rural ideology, religion, 'agency' and 'parallel power structures'.

Volunteering and philanthropy were an important part of the response of the Camden community to the war. Volunteering for patriotic activities was an extension of rural ideology where localness and intimacy created reciprocity between people based on their common interests. The isolation, independence and individualism of rural people resulted in a self-help approach in response to their need for mutual support in their times of crisis. The volunteering that resulted from these processes reflected the existing social and economic divisions in the community, while at the same time retaining the social cohesion that gave the community an identifiable character.

Volunteers, both male and female, feel a desire to give something back to the community, and have a great sense of purpose to do 'something worthy' that makes them 'feel good'.⁷⁴ Volunteers interpret service as self-sacrifice, dedication to duty

⁷⁴ Tepana, 'Friends in Deed Organisation'. [Television Broadcast]

and caring about other human beings.⁷⁵ For these individuals the important traits of volunteering are stoicism and self-fulfilment.⁷⁶ Volunteering has been defined by Davis Smith as 'any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to, close relatives'.⁷⁷ Voluntarism, according to Smith, is a 'private activity, motivated by altruism and a commitment to the community'.⁷⁸ Wartime volunteering by Camden women involved self-sacrifice and devotion to duty in the belief that the volunteers were being patriotic.

Philanthropy, which is closely related to volunteering, has been defined by McCarthy 'as the giving of time, money and/or valuables for public benefit',⁷⁹ and differentiates it from charity which 'seeks to ameliorate individual suffering'.⁸⁰ Others see philanthropy as emerging from charity, which then evolved into voluntarism after the Second World War.⁸¹ This thesis defines philanthropy as giving time and money for the public benefit. It is distinguished from charity and social welfare, which is interpreted as relieving poverty and disadvantages in all its variations.

Volunteering can be divided into two elements, formal and informal. Cordingley has defined formal volunteering as that which takes place within a voluntary organisation 'that exists to fulfil a social purpose'.⁸² Voluntary associations according to Lyons are 'the expression of the determination of people to work together to provide a service or to advance a cause, for themselves or for others'.⁸³ Informal volunteering, as defined by Bittman and Thomson, is 'distinguished by the absence of any formal principles of organisation' and 'is largely carried out in the domestic sphere'.⁸⁴ In this context the Camden WVS was a formally organised

⁷⁵ Kamins, Rabbi, 'Good Friday Special'. [Television broadcast].

⁷⁶ *Camden Crier*, 7 September 1997.

⁷⁷ J. Davis Smith, *Volunteering in the UK: Some Findings from a New National Survey* (Institute for Volunteering Research, London, 1993) quoted in Diana Leat, 'Invention Research: The Development of Voluntary Sector Studies in the UK', p. 74.

⁷⁸ Smith, 'Government and the Nonprofit Sector', p. 92.

⁷⁹ McCarthy, 'The History of Philanthropy and Nonprofits', p. 8.

⁸⁰ McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited*, p. 24.

⁸¹ Shurlee Swain, 'Philanthropy', in Davison, Hirst and Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p. 503; Melanie Oppenheimer, 'An Overview of the Voluntary Principle in Australia', in Warburton and Oppenheimer, *Volunteers and Volunteering*, pp. 12, 14.

⁸² As opposed to informal volunteering which occurs in the private sphere on an ad hoc basis between individuals. Sha Cordingley, 'The Definition and Principles of Volunteering', in Warburton & Oppenheimer, *Volunteers and Volunteering*, p. 73.

⁸³ Lyons, 'The History of Philanthropy and Nonprofits', p. 24.

⁸⁴ Michael Bittman and Cathy Thomson, 'Invisible Support', and Melanie Oppenheimer and Jeni Warburton, 'Introduction', in Warburton and Oppenheimer, *Volunteers and Volunteering*, pp. 98-99,

voluntary association where Camden women freely gave their time to undertake a structured programme of patriotic activities to assist the homefront war effort. The female volunteers felt a desire 'to do their bit for the war effort'.

Female volunteering and philanthropy is part of the general historiography of the Australian voluntary sector,⁸⁵ which Lyons has argued, has been mainly concerned with 'celebratory' organisational histories, a few of which locate 'the organisation in a wider historical context'.⁸⁶ These histories are principally commissioned works of specific associations written by 'loyal insiders' and the results 'have been patchy'.⁸⁷ The scholarly works in Australia include the Charity Organisation Society, Legacy and others,⁸⁸ while Oppenheimer and Lyons have provided overviews of the history of the Australian voluntary sector.⁸⁹

There are only a few studies that examine the relationship between war, and volunteering and philanthropy. There are two treatises on the International Red Cross movement,⁹⁰ and a few studies of war-specific homefront voluntary organisations in Australia, such as the Australian Comforts Fund.⁹¹ Oppenheimer

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⁸⁵ Scholarly interest in volunteering, voluntarism and philanthropy in Australia is only a relatively recent amongst third sector research groups. Leat makes the point that the term voluntary sector did not exist in British or American literature before the 1970s. Leat, 'Invention Research: The Development of Voluntary Sector Studies in the UK', p. 53. McCarthy has given two principal reasons for scholarly interest in nonprofits and philanthropy: the recent shift in political systems around the world, including the end of the Cold War and globalisation, all of which has led to the view that civil society rather than centralised government held key for global governance; and the emerging field of nonprofit studies, through for instance, the Yale Program on Nonprofit organisations. McCarthy, 'The History of Philanthropy and Nonprofits', pp. 7-8. The third sector is made up 'not-for-profit and non-government' organisations that are related to volunteering and philanthropy, and the development of 'social capital', 'active citizenship' and the 're-invigorating [of] civil society.' Australian and New Zealand Third Sector Research Ltd, promotional brochure, 2000. This organisation promotes the interests of the third sector through the *Third Sector Review*, its *Newsletter*, conferences, advocacy and other activities. For discussion of citizenship, see Muetzelfeldt, 'Citizenship?'. For discussion on social capital and civil society see: Onyx & Bullen, *Measuring Social Capital*; Norton, Latham, Sturgess, Stewart-Weeks, *Social Capital*; Cox, *A Truly Civil Society*. There are two competing discourses in voluntary sector theory, the 'nonprofit sector' and 'civil society' paradigms, and both are pre-occupied with contemporary issues surrounding volunteering and philanthropy. For an examination of these discourses see Lyons, *Nonprofit Sector or Civil Society*.

⁸⁶ Lyons, 'The History of Philanthropy and Nonprofits', p. 24.

⁸⁷ Comments from Paul Ashton & Christopher Keating, 'Commissioned history', in Davison, Hirst & MacIntyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p. 140.

⁸⁸ For instance, Kennedy, *Charity Warfare*; Lyons, *Legacy*; Howie-Willis, *A Century For Australia*.

⁸⁹ Lyons, 'The history of non-profit organisations in Australia'; Oppenheimer, 'Volunteers in Action'; Oppenheimer, 'An Overview of the Voluntary Principle in Australia', in Warburton and Oppenheimer, *Volunteers and Volunteering*, pp. 9-18.

⁹⁰ Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream*; Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*.

⁹¹ Bowden, *The History of the Australian Comforts Fund*; Badham Jackson, *A State at War*; Badham Jackson's *Proud History*; and Hull, *Salvos With the Forces*; Other contemporary examples are given

has conducted the only examples of major work on Australian voluntarism and war in her groundbreaking studies of voluntary work in Australia during the Second World War, and her research on the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD).⁹²

Within the historiography of the WVS there have been a number of celebratory histories written about the British WVS, for example Graves, Graham, the British WVS and Bentley Beauman.⁹³ These also provide a useful background for the formation of the New South Wales WVS, and the women's service ideology that was part of Victorian volunteering and philanthropy. General histories of wartime Britain, as well as other British sources, not only provide a useful background of the British WVS,⁹⁴ but provide clarity to the interaction between the British, New South Wales and Camden WVS, and the role of the RAF in Camden.⁹⁵ Oppenheimer also provides useful observations by Ivy Brookes on the role of the British WVS.⁹⁶ The influence of the British WVS on the wartime policies of the New South Wales Government is also highlighted by an examination of the New South Wales National Emergency Services correspondence files. For instance, it was obvious that the New South Wales Government was influenced by the activities of the British WVS in the establishment of the Civilian War Emergency Aid Service in New South Wales, an arm of which was established in Camden in 1942.⁹⁷ There are no general or scholarly histories of the WVS or its role in wartime voluntarism in New South Wales, although there are general references to the WVS in Oppenheimer's *All Work No Pay* and her doctoral thesis.⁹⁸

According to Lyons voluntary organisations 'constitute... much of the fabric of the local communities'⁹⁹ and one of the few studies in this area examines mechanic's institutes and schools' of arts.¹⁰⁰ Amongst the scholarly works that examine local

⁹² in Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Patriotic Funds', in Beaumont, *Australian Defence*, pp. 281, 322-324. Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*; Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*; Oppenheimer, 'VAs'; Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs*.
⁹³ Graves, *Women in Green*; Graham, *The Story of WVS*; Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*; Bentley Beauman, *Green Sleeves*.
⁹⁴ Calder, *The People's War*; Marwick, *The Mass-Observation File Reports*; Ziegler, *London at War*.
⁹⁵ Cantwell, John D., *The Second World War*, Ministry of Defence, Air Historical Branch (Royal Air Force) Information leaflets.
⁹⁶ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 105.
⁹⁷ AANSW, NESCF, 1939-1945, 10/42291-10/42361, 10/4614-4739 (part), 10/4763; AANSW, Department of Labour and Industry and Social Services, History Files, File No 1, Box 18/2796, 1942 Report, *Civilian War Emergency Aid Service*.
⁹⁸ Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*, pp. 118-119, 158; Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, Chapter Six.
⁹⁹ Lyons, 'The History of Philanthropy and Nonprofits', p. 24.
¹⁰⁰ One of the few examples is Candy & Laurent, *Pioneering Culture*.

communities, volunteering and war include studies of Whyalla, Albury, Colac and Campbelltown.¹⁰¹ Other efforts examine specific aspects of the homefront such as Peel's examination of the Colac salvage effort, McCracken's study of the Coburg Red Cross Society and Willis's examination of the Camden Red Cross.¹⁰² Wartime voluntary activities in rural communities were sometimes initiated by men, who then abandoned the activity. They then left the responsibility for its continuation to those within female philanthropy. This process has been examined by McQuilton in rural Victoria during the First World War¹⁰³ and is taken further by this thesis.

One of the important early works, which examined the relationship between female philanthropy and war was Bayne's *Australian Women At War*. Apart from examining women in the defence forces and their role in paid work on the homefront, Bayne discusses 'voluntary unpaid war work', and the service commitment and the organisational character of wartime female philanthropy.¹⁰⁴ Popular works have also been written by McKernan, Adam Smith, and others mentioned earlier in this analysis.¹⁰⁵ Damousi, Saunders and Bolton provide a useful historiography of women's contribution to wartime volunteering and philanthropy.¹⁰⁶ All of these works provide valuable background to female volunteering and philanthropy in Camden and place their effort in context against the general contribution of women to the war effort.

The field of female biography covers the lives of women who experienced war and their contribution to female philanthropy, although most are only of a general nature.¹⁰⁷ Within the historiography of the WVS there are a number of specific publications on the life and times of Stella Reading, and her attitude to volunteering and philanthropy.¹⁰⁸ The story of Patricia Colman is the only example of this type of

101. Peel, 'Voluntary War Effort'; Pennay, 'From Country Town to Provincial City'; Stanley, 'Don't let Whyalla Down'; de Matos, 'When the War Came to Campbelltown'.

102. Peel, 'Salvaging Community Pride'; Peel, 'The last man and the last shilling?'; Willis, War and Community; McCracken 'Coburg Red Cross Society'.

103. McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War*, pp. 119-137.

104. Bayne, *Australian Women At War*, pp. 9-14.

105. McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*; McKernan, *All In!*; Adam-Smith, *Australian Women At War*.

106. Joy Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums, Women's Mobilisations, 1914-1919', and Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, 'Girdled For War, Women's Mobilisations in World War Two' in Saunders & Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia*, pp. 350-374, 376-397.

107. Bird, *My God! It's a Woman*; Brister, *Memories*; Atwell, *Growing Up in the 40's*; Lambert, *A Suburban Girl*; Lawson, *Connie Sweetheart*; Malcher, *Women of Ku-ring-gai*; Lindsay, *Time Without Clocks*

108. Pike, *Stella Reading*; Reading, *Voluntary Service*; Fenno, *It's the Job That Counts*.

work experience in Camden.¹⁰⁹ Histories of women's services provide useful background to the general area of war and gender¹¹⁰, but the contribution of many rural women in this area remains unacknowledged. The contribution of local women to Camden's wartime history has been considerable but has remained largely invisible. Even the role of Camden's female elite has received little attention, especially the life of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, and her mother, Elizabeth.¹¹¹ The wartime experience of nurses provides an interesting juxtaposition to the voluntary effort of the WVS. Nursing was one of the few areas of female activity that combined the Victorian construction of femininity with war. Nursing required self-sacrifice, devotion to duty and 'quiet heroism',¹¹² and provided one of the few wartime experiences that was part of the male domain.¹¹³ Nursing, according to Bassett, clung to the notion of separate sphere,¹¹⁴ and was a vocation where religious inspiration was an important motivation.¹¹⁵ These themes are evident in memoirs of wartime nursing by McBryde, Hughes, Burchill and McQuade-White.¹¹⁶ Camden women associated with the WVS did undertake nursing duties as members of the VAD and later the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS) and is part of the story of the WVS in Camden.

One of the principal themes in female volunteering and philanthropy surrounds the notion of service, and how it is related to the Victorian construction of gender based on the 'ideals of dependency' and the 'separatedness' of spheres.¹¹⁷ The work of Poovey, Dyhouse and Tinkler argue that the Victorian construction of femininity assumed a service role undertaken by women for their husband and family, the sick and elderly and the community through philanthropy.¹¹⁸ Middle class women were socialised and educated in these roles as adolescent girls¹¹⁹ and then, later in life, put these learnt values into practice through volunteering and philanthropy. One

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Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*;

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For example, histories of the Australian Women's Army Service by Howard, *You'll Be Sorry!*, Howard, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, Ollif, *Women in Khaki*, Bomford, *Soldiers of the Queen*. Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force by Thomson, *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia*, Stevenson & Darling, *The WAAAF Book*. Voluntary Aid Detachments/Australian Army Medical Women's Service by Critch, *Our Kind of War*, Goodman, *Voluntary Aid Detachments*, Mount-Batten, *From Blue to Khaki*, Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs*.

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See de Vries's *Strength of Spirit* and an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

112.

McBryde, *Quiet Heroines*.

113.

Sandy Jeffs, 'Hospital To Hell', in Hawthorne & Klein, *Australia for Women*, pp. 48-53.

114.

Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, p. 3.

115.

Ann Bradshaw, 'The Historical Tradition of Care', in Brykczynska, *Caring*, pp. 18-23.

116.

McBryde, *Quiet Heroines*; Hughes, *Matilda Waltzes with the Tommies*; Burchill, *Australian Nurses*; McQuade White, *Reminiscences*.

117.

Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp. 6-8.

118.

Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp. 27-28; Poovey, *Uneven Developments*, pp. 4-21; Tinkler, 'At Your Service', p. 354.

119.

Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, p. 21; Tinkler, 'At Your Service', p. 353.

consequence of this socialisation process meant that middle class women in Camden usually only received collective recognition for their volunteering. Any individual acknowledgement of sewing, knitting or any other domestically related activity during the war was only of a limited nature, unlike the public kudos given to the elite.

Women's organisations developed an ideology of service based on a set of values and ideas of women involved in philanthropy surrounding the 'notion of service'. Brett maintains that for women 'goodness was equated with service and self-sacrifice' and that this was part of the middle class's 'conception of citizenship' and the 'concept of service'.¹²⁰ Wartime volunteering, in particular, was seen as a patriotic act of nationalism that involved dedication to duty, self-sacrifice and altruism. These values were seen by some as a patriotic action that affirmed their membership as citizens of the British race, and were common to most organisations within British Victorian philanthropy. Wartime philanthropy was seen as a national priority that ensured the safety and survival of the British race, through active citizenship on the homefront. Brett makes the point that women were at the forefront of this type of service, when they put 'the interests of the common good before those of the self'.¹²¹ The nation was under threat and homefront service through voluntarism helped the defence of nation. The 'ultimate service as a citizen', according to Brett, 'was to sacrifice their life in war', and she argues that 'service was also required of those who stayed behind'. Wartime volunteering was a patriotic act, as much as it was an act of altruism. Brett maintains that 'more recent Australian historians have missed the political meaning of women's wartime mobilisation around voluntary service'. She argues

that domestic skills and virtues had a vital role to play in the survival and the future development of the nation, and that women as their chief practitioners were valuable citizens.¹²²

The thesis agrees with this proposition, particularly with respect to the role of women in the Camden WVS.

¹²⁰ Brett, *Australian Liberals*, p. 60.

¹²¹ Brett, *Australian Liberals*, p. 61.

¹²² Brett, *Australian Liberals*, p. 62.

Damousi and Lake maintain that the meaning of warfare for the sexes 'has traditionally been understood through a series of conceptual oppositions - home front/battle front, passivity/activity, weakness/strength, private/public, staying/departing, defended/defenders'. They maintain that traditionally 'women were defined as passive flesh, naturally weak, outside history, irrelevant to the making of nations'.¹²³ These interpretations are simplistic and unnecessarily confining of the role of women in the war effort. The service role of women, their dedication to duty and self-sacrifice use terminology that could equally apply to both sides of the 'conceptual opposition'.

An integral part of women's service role in the British Empire, according to Davin, was the ideology of motherhood, which stated that women had the duty and destiny to be the 'mothers of the race'. Child-rearing was a national duty, and good motherhood was an essential component in the (eugenicist's) ideology of racial health and purity. The family was the basic institution of society and women's domestic role remained supreme.¹²⁴ By the inter-war period pre-occupation with the family and motherhood had turned these traits into a national priority for the British race. Imperial motherhood was promoted as a scientific necessity and a patriotic duty.¹²⁵ There were concerns over the decay of the home and family life expressed by a number of British women's groups, especially those associated with evangelical Christianity. These desires influenced the shape of middle class female philanthropy and volunteering through organisations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the National Council of Women, the Mother's Union, the Women's Institutes, the CWA, the Girls' Friendly Society and the Girl Guides. These voluntary organisations provided a training ground for middle class women and allowed them to gain a 'public persona' while upholding the 'values of both middle-class femininity and bourgeois respectability'¹²⁶. Camden women also experienced these social processes through their inter-war volunteering and philanthropy and this contributed to the foundation of the WVS in Camden.

¹²³ Damousi & Lake, *Gender and War*, pp. 3-5.

¹²⁴ Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', pp. 9-66.

¹²⁵ This tradition was related to eugenicist theories of biological inheritance, racial hygiene and social degeneration. See Carol Bacchi, 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes Towards Women', in Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*, p. 151; Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 13.

¹²⁶ Wright, 'Of Public Houses and Private Lives', pp. 69-71.

The role of female philanthropy in country towns has been examined by McKenzie¹²⁷, Clark¹²⁸ Wood¹²⁹, Gunn¹³⁰ and Teather¹³¹. All show the influence of aspects of the Victorian interpretation of women's service and self-sacrifice, and their relationship to rural ideology. This theme is continued in Berzins's *North Coast Women*, which examines country town life, and the place of women in rural philanthropy.¹³² The position of rural women, and their relationship to rural ideology, is explored by James in his collection of essays, and other writers in the edited diaries of a number of women, including Katie Hume, Georgina Oswin and Maude Richardson.¹³³ Women's service role and philanthropy is evident in Malcher's *Women of Ku-ring-gai*, a series of biographies, as well as works which examine the position of women in relation to class, such as Russell's *A Wish of Distinction*. Although not analysed in these terms, the numerous examples of institutional histories of women's voluntary organisations describe the service role of women. Examples include the histories of the New South Wales Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Women's League of Health, the New South Wales CWA, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Civilian War Widows of Australia and the Catholic Women's League.¹³⁴ Earlier research examining female philanthropy has been provided by two collections of essays that were the result of two Women and Labour conferences in 1978 (Sydney)¹³⁵ and 1982 (Melbourne).¹³⁶

^{127.} McKenzie recognised two types of women's organisations, 'sex-segregated bodies' 'where the majority of women who are "joiners" come together for social, recreational, welfare and para-feminist purposes'. The other type of organisations were 'ladies auxiliaries,' which played a subordinate role to male committee members and office-bearers, and were assigned 'fund-raising and catering functions'. MacKenzie, *Women in Australia*, pp. 292, 318-9.

^{128.} Clark states that rural conservatism has restricted rural women by a traditional notion of service as 'caring and nurturing functions'. Traditional organisations are 'based on the established virtues of religious belief, loyalty, and service to those in need.' They have a traditional view of women's role and are made up 'the CWA, the Red Cross, churchwomen's guilds, and women's auxiliaries of service clubs'. In contrast contemporary organisations have a narrow focus and high turnover of members, have a rapid growth and decline, meetings informal and they do not see themselves as charities. Eileen Clark, 'Community Organisations and Women's Work' in James, *Women in Rural Australia*, pp. 43-58.

^{129.} Wood maintains that before 1900 'charitable and welfare work' were the main fields of female voluntarism, and in the Edwardian period 'women began to create a social life'. Wood also examined the leadership roles of a number of key women in Queensland philanthropy and volunteering. Wood, 'Women's Organisations in Queensland 1859-1958'.

^{130.} Gunn, 'For the Man on the Land', p. 32.

^{131.} Teather, 'Remote Rural Women's Ideologies, Spaces and Networks'; Teather, 'The First Rural Women's Network in New South Wales'; Teather, 'The Country Women's Association'; Teather, 'Mandate of the Country Women's Association'.

^{132.} Baiba Berzins, *North Coast Women*.

^{133.} Frost, *No Place For A Nervous Lady*; Bonnin, *Katie Hume on the Darling Downs*; Karney, *No Rugged Landscape*; Hulme-Moir, *The Edge of Time*.

^{134.} Malcher, *Women of Ku-ring-gai*; Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*; Williams & Holliday, *Women's Christian Temperance Union*; Hughes, *The League of Health in Australia*; Townsend, *Serving the Country*; Dunn, *The Dauntless Bunch*; Clark, *No Mean Destiny*; Clarke, *Just Us*; Carey, *Truly Feminine Truly Catholic*.

^{135.} *Women, Class and History* has essays on early nineteenth century Australian female philanthropy and voluntarism, the Mother's Union, the Women's Peace Army, railway unions auxiliaries, the Australian Women's Guild of Empire and women's voluntary work between 1939-41.

Saunders and Evans,¹³⁷ and Hawthorne and Klein¹³⁸ have provided more recent collections of essays.

Windschuttle, Swain, Godden, Dyhouse and McCarthy have examined the close relationship between the Victorian construction of femininity, evangelical Protestantism and female philanthropy.¹³⁹ Willis maintains that female philanthropy has always had a place within the Church and has provided many 'opportunities that might otherwise have been unavailable'.¹⁴⁰ Ruether claims that 'religion is the single most important shaper and enforcer of the image and role of women in culture and society'.¹⁴¹ Work on the relationship between religion and female philanthropy has been provided by Gaden,¹⁴² Willis's collection of essays,¹⁴³ research by West¹⁴⁴ and more recently work by Diebolt.¹⁴⁵ Female volunteering associated with philanthropy and religion provided some of the few acceptable 'public personas' for upper-middle class women.¹⁴⁶ Philanthropy was based on notions of Christian charity, duty and service, and imposed moral obligations on the elite related to their social class and notions of *noblesse oblige*. The combination of evangelical Protestantism and upper class philanthropy provided a ready vehicle for the spread of the women's service ideology, particularly with the imperial wars of the late nineteenth century, and had an influence on Sibella Macarthur Onslow and her attitudes to philanthropy.

Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*.

¹³⁶ The second collection, *Worth Her Salt* has essays on Sydney philanthropist Helen Fell (1849-1935), Melbourne reformers Brettina Smyth (1842-1898), Muriel Heagney (1885-1974), Melbourne's social reform movement between 1900-1914, the Women's Trade Union League, United Associations of Women, Perth feminists Bessie Rischbieth (1876) and Jessie Street (1889-1970). Bevege, James & Shute, *Worth Her Salt*.

¹³⁷ Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia*.

¹³⁸ Hawthorne & Klein, *Australia for Women*.

¹³⁹ Elizabeth Windschuttle, "Feeding the Poor and Sapping the Strength": The Public Role of Ruling Class Women in Eastern Australia 1788-1850' in Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*, pp. 54, 61, 70-71; Shurlee Swain, 'Philanthropy', in Davison, Hirst & Macintyre, *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, p. 504; Judith Godden, 'Portrait of a lady: A decade in the life of Helen Fell (1849-1935)' in Bevege, James and Shute, *Worth Her Salt*, pp. 40-42; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, p. 28. McCarthy maintains that research commissioned by the Centre for the Study of Philanthropy's International Collaborative Research Project on Women and Philanthropy (NY) in 1993 showed that 'evangelical Protestantism - appears to be the religious environment more conducive to the development of giving and voluntarism, charity and social advocacy, and for ensuring laywomen's ability to control their organisations without undue ministerial interference'. McCarthy, 'The History of Philanthropy', p. 16.

¹⁴⁰ Willis, *Women, Faith and Fetes*, p. 15.

¹⁴¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether (ed), *Religion and Sexism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), p. 4, cited in Willis, *Women, Faith and Fetes*, p. 17.

¹⁴² John R Gaden, 'Reclaiming their freedom: women and the Church' in Grieve & Grimshaw, *Australian Women*, pp. 15-24.

¹⁴³ Willis, *Women, Faith and Fetes*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ West, *Daughters of Freedom*.

¹⁴⁵ Diebolt, 'Women and Philanthropy in France', [Electronic Source].

¹⁴⁶ Judith Godden, 'Portrait of a lady: A decade in the life of Helen Fell (1849-1935)' in Bevege, James and Shute, *Worth Her Salt*, p. 40.

Women have exercised considerable social authority and influence in female philanthropy, despite the patriarchal role taken by men in some organisations. Gunn maintains that women were 'active agents of social change'¹⁴⁷ and Foley contends 'the women's movement's utilisation of the language of separate sphere and ideas about woman's "proper place" has lead to misconceptions about their intent'[sic].¹⁴⁸ Alston, in her work on rural women, maintains that these women held considerable 'private power' and were comfortable with the 'status quo'.¹⁴⁹ This is part of a perceptible shift in feminist theory since the early 1970s where feminist writers concentrated on the subordination and oppression of women.¹⁵⁰ Feminists writers like McCarthy and Lake maintain that women have had the ability to act in their own right. McCarthy maintains that women 'carved out a public niche for themselves'¹⁵¹, and Lake states that women 'have been major actors' in shaping Australian society through 'agency' and 'creativity'.¹⁵²

Following this theme Davidoff and Wright maintain that some women had both 'public and private personas' and 'upheld the values of both middle-class femininity and bourgeois respectability: propriety and good conduct'. The story of these women, according to Wright, is one of 'agency and entitlement', where they 'reaped both the public and private rewards' between the public and private world,¹⁵³ and were able to cross over the boundaries between them.

McCarthy maintains that there were 'parallel power structures' in female philanthropy, where women publicly participated in voluntary organisations that paralleled those of men, but did not replicate them.¹⁵⁴ Some of these women claimed a place on the 'public stage' and exercised 'authority' in their own right, and McCarthy has provided many examples.¹⁵⁵ This process was particularly evident in the biographies of a number of late nineteenth century female philanthropists, such

¹⁴⁷ Gunn, 'For the Man on the Land', p. 32.

¹⁴⁸ Foley, *The Women's Movement in New South Wales and Victoria, 1918-1938*.

¹⁴⁹ Alston, *Women on the Land*, pp. 4-28.

¹⁵⁰ Alston, *Women on the Land*, p. 14.

¹⁵¹ McCarthy, 'Women and Philanthropy', p. 331.

¹⁵² Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath, Quartly, *Creating a Nation*, p. 1.

¹⁵³ Wright, 'Of Public Houses and Private Lives', pp. 63-75; Davidoff, *World's Between*, pp. 151-175.

¹⁵⁴ Kathleen McCarthy, 'Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Sphere', in McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited*, pp. 1-34.

¹⁵⁵ McCarthy, 'Women and Philanthropy', pp. 333-4; McCarthy, *Lady Bountiful Revisited*; Diebolt, 'Women and Philanthropy in France'.

as Smart's exposition on Cecilia Downing (1858-1952) and Godden's biography of Sydney philanthropist Helen Fell (1868-1935).¹⁵⁶ Other examples are provided by Williams and Holliday's history of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in New South Wales,¹⁵⁷ Jones's examination of the women's suffrage movement in South Australia,¹⁵⁸ and more recently by Oppenheimer's examination of the relationship between Lady Helen Munro Ferguson and the Australian Red Cross.¹⁵⁹ It is also evident in Gerard and Horn's examination of the role of the rural female elite, the 'Lady Bountifuls'.¹⁶⁰ Parallelism of this type was evident among the Camden women who founded the WVS and the wider field of female philanthropy. For example, Reading's speeches, her own writings and biographical notes of her colleagues and friends illustrate her own 'power structure'.¹⁶¹ This also applies to female philanthropists like Sibella Macarthur Onslow, and to a lesser extent, Zoe Crookston.

Conclusion

This, then, provides the theoretical, thematic and methodological context for the study of the Camden WVS between 1939 and 1945. Although some of the themes identified have been treated separately here, they often overlap as will become evident in the thesis, a reflection of the complex interplay of elements that constitute a sense of place, community and social position in rural society. But before the thesis examines the WVS, it is useful to establish the social context within which it would operate, in Camden at the outbreak of war.

¹⁵⁶ Smart, "For the Good that We Can Do", pp. 39-60; Judith Godden, 'Portrait of a lady: A decade in the life of Helen Fell (1849-1935)' in Bevege, James and Shute, *Worth Her Salt*, pp. 40-42.

¹⁵⁷ Williams & Holliday, *Women's Christian Temperance Union*.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, *In Her Own Name*, pp. 81-121.

¹⁵⁹ Oppenheimer, 'Lady Helen Munro Ferguson'.

¹⁶⁰ Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful', p. 193; Horn, *Ladies of the Manor*.

¹⁶¹ Pike, The Baroness, (ed), *Stella Reading, Some Recollections by Her Friends*, np, London, 1979; Ferri, Pauline, (ed), *It's The Job That Counts, 1939-1953, A Selection From The Speeches and Writings of The Dowager Marchioness of Reading*, For Private Circulation Only, np, London, 1954; Reading, Stella, *Voluntary Service*, Women's Royal Voluntary Service, London, c.1966.

CHAPTER TWO

‘A LITTLE ENGLAND’

THE CAMDEN COMMUNITY, ITS SOCIAL CHARACTER AND THE WAR

Volunteering and philanthropy are activities that are closely associated with the concept of 'community', and the social threads that are identified with it, in terms of location, occupation, religion, language and class.¹ This thesis argues that in Camden wartime volunteering and philanthropy were particularly susceptible to the influence of Camden's class divisions, conservatism and parochialism, which were all part of the area's rural ideology and 'social threads' within the Camden community. They functioned as a constant in Camden society, its 'wallpaper', and the influence was clearly evident in the activities and responses of the Camden WVS. Before this chapter explores these social characteristics, it is useful to undertake a short historical overview, which will highlight their origins. The chapter will then provide an overview of the war, which provides the broader context for the WVS in Camden.

A Brief History of Camden

The origins of Camden's social structure and the essence of its 'community', is related to the social, cultural, economic and environmental factors which contributed to its identity. They can be sourced to the early colonial history of the Camden area.

The landscape was the reason that brought the first European contact with the area. The Aboriginal practice of burning the underwood meant that Europeans who first saw the area 'looked about with pleasure at the luxuriant grass that covered both the flats and the low hills' This was an ideal setting for pastoral pursuits based on sheep, cattle and wheat, which was the foundation for European activity in the 'Cowpasture'.² The European desire for land in the area meant that initially the

¹ Lucy Taksa, 'Defining the Field', in Community History Program, *History and Communities*, p. 17.
² Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 5. See for example, King, *Elizabeth Macarthur*, Ward, *James Macarthur*, and

Dharawal, then the Gandangara people were dispossessed, then displaced from the district.³

The trials and tribulations of John Macarthur after he arrived in New South Wales are part of the Camden story, but are not a vital part of this thesis, and in any case are documented well enough elsewhere for the general reader to follow them up.⁴ Suffice to say that from the time of John Macarthur's original grant of 5,000 acres in 1805 the interests of Bolton's 'self-styled gentry', of whom Macarthur was one, were to dominate the region.⁵ These large Protestant landholders established a rural hegemony in the area based on property, education and political influence. Their wealth was concentrated in the 'five big estates' that used convict labour: *Camden Park*, *Brownlow Hill*, *Kirkham*, *Elderslie*, and *Macquarie Grove*.⁶ As the pastoral period proceeded Bolton's self-styled gentry 'took on the outward and visible signs of the British ruling elite', the titles, the veneration of landed estates, the hierarchical attitudes and the myth of gracious living.⁷ Led by the Macarthurs of *Camden Park*, some of this group created social networks that functioned on a local-provincial-metropolitan basis (Camden-Sydney-London), and developed a social dominance of the area that persisted for over 100 years.⁸

At this stage the social structure of the district had four tiers, gentry, overseers, convicts and Aborigines. Governor Bourke's 1835 plan to subsidise immigrant labour injected yet another tier into this social mix, tenant farmers. Under this arrangement the Macarthurs brought out thirty-five families from England, six families of vigneron from the Rhine area and a small number of single men.⁹ Some of these tenants eventually established businesses in the new village of Camden. with descendants of these individuals still operating them over 100 years later.

By the end of the 'pioneering pastoral period' in the 1840s,¹⁰ the Macarthur family were the largest landholders in the area. They had extensive pastoral interests that

³ for an alternative view, Garrahan and White, *Merinos, Myths and Macarthurs*.
⁴ Liston, 'The Dharawal and Gandangara', p. 49.
⁵ For instance, Ellis, *John Macarthur*, and more recently, Duffy, *Man of Honour*.
⁶ Bolton, 'The Idea of a Colonial Gentry', p. 324.
⁷ Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 20.
⁸ Bolton, 'The Ideas of a Colonial Gentry', p. 327.
⁹ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 27-39.
¹⁰ Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 38.
Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 4.

stretched throughout the colony,¹¹ as well as family members to act as their agents in London, and members of the family in the New South Wales Legislative Council. In this respect, they were not alone amongst the Camden gentry.¹² According to Atkinson, these large landholders were the 'leaders among the landed gentlemen and for the moment that breed was supreme'.¹³ Their economic power and social authority in the district was to prove amazingly resilient for the next 100 years.

The spatial distribution of the population in the area was set by 1827, along with the network of roads, villages and hamlets that resulted from it.¹⁴ Atkinson maintains that a contributing factor was 'the tight network of relationships maintained by an easy half-hour on foot or horseback, or seated in a bumpy dray'.¹⁵ The earliest settlements in the district pre-date Camden, and include the hamlets of Cawdor (1822), Narellan (1827), Cobbitty (1828) and Elderslie (1828),¹⁶ and further a field Campbelltown (1820)¹⁷ and Goulburn (1828).¹⁸

As far as the gentry were concerned their view of an 'ideal society' included

village communities, in which an obedient and industrious tenantry enjoyed the public libraries and mechanics institutes, the ploughing matches and hospitable sporting events organised and controlled by the landed gentry.¹⁹

This 'ideal' was given an air of reality when the new village of Camden was approved (1835), the street plan drawn up (1836) and first sale of land held in 1841. The first recommendation for the 'small town' of Camden was made in 1830, but delayed by the opposition of John Macarthur, until his death in 1834.²⁰ By 1846 Camden had a population of 242, and this had increased to 458 by 1856. Atkinson

¹¹ From the mountainous Burragorang Valley area (Hannibal Macarthur, *Jooriland*), Parramatta (*Elizabeth Farm, Vineyard*), Goulbourn, (*Arthursleigh*, 1825) in the Hunter Valley (Australian Agricultural Company), Murrumbidgee District (Hannibal, leasehold for depasturing, 1840; James and William, *Nangas*, 72,000 acres, 1848), and financial interests and real estate in Sydney.

¹² John's agent in London was his son Edward. John was a member of the Legislative Council in 1829, James 1839, Hannibal in 1830. George Macleay of *Brownlow Hill* had land on the Fish River between Goulburn and Yass (*Pullitop*, 1840) and his other pastoral runs included *Borombola* (50,000 acres) and *Toganmain* (192,000 acres), both fronting the Murrumbidgee River (1847). Campbell, *'Squatting'*, pp. 23, 50, 55.

¹³ Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 38.

¹⁴ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁵ Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 80.

¹⁶ Mylrea, *Camden District*, pp. 25-36.

¹⁷ Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁸ Bayley, *Lilac City*, p. 16.

¹⁹ Bolton, 'The Idea of a Colonial Gentry', p. 319.

²⁰ Atkinson, *Camden*, pp. 35-36.

points out that the initial growth of Camden was typical of a rush of 'new villages' that appeared in New South Wales and a new view in Sydney that thought 'more positively about life in the country'.²¹ The creation of the village introduced another layer into the social hierarchy of the district, an urban based *petite bourgeoisie* made up of shopkeepers and tradesmen. *Camden Park* remained the largest rural property in the area and dominated both the village and the surrounding area.²² By 1850 it has been estimated that 900 people lived and worked on *Camden Park*.²³

The foundation of the village allowed the Macarthurs to display their wealth, power and influence through 'British Victorian' philanthropy and maintain the moral tone of the village. They gave land to each of the major religious denominations in the village for churches, and under James Macarthur's patronage the School of Arts was founded in 1865.²⁴ The voluntary ethos was strong amongst the Non-conformists in the village. The Camden Methodists ran a Sunday School in the 1840s, and as part of the temperance movement, formed the Camden Band of Hope (1858) and a Camden division of the Order of the Sons of Temperance (1867), called the Star of the South Division, No 19.²⁵ These were all male affairs, but evangelical women in Camden did take a public role in the church, not unlike other parts of British society, a path which led them into Victorian female philanthropy. One such woman in the early 1860s was the wife of the Primitive Methodist minister in Camden, Ruth Waters. Freemasonry also gained a foothold in the town in 1860s with the formation of the Lodge Southern Cross and Ancient Order of Royal Forresters (1874).²⁶

The role of 'blow ins', of which more will be said later in the thesis, or 'missionaries' as Atkinson calls them, played an important role in the development of social attitudes and relationships in the village. School teachers, Christian ministers and doctors brought fresh ideas, new approaches and a wider view of the world outside the village. John Ollis, the National school teacher, a supporter of 'Liberalism', was

²¹ Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 50, and Atkinson's *Camden* provides a detailed analysis of social relations in the village and surrounding farmland from 1840 to 1870.

²² The estate also has an important place in the national history and development of agriculture in Australia, and claims many 'firsts'. For example, William Macarthur, a horticulturist, operated a commercial nursery on *Camden Park* and issued a number of catalogues between 1843 and 1861. The nursery imported large stocks of plants from Europe, and sold stock all over Australia. Colin Mills, Camden, Interview, 13 December 2003. Apart from the sale of wool in Europe, the Macarthurs exported horses to India, conducted a successful vineyard and had many successful vintages. They had extensive orchards and grew numerous varieties of fruit.

²³ Turner & Gregory, *Camden Park*, p. 72.

²⁴ Atkinson, *Camden*, pp. 182-184.

²⁵ This had started in Britain in 1864. Atkinson, *Camden*, pp. 157, 181-182.

²⁶ Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 169, 120.

an advocate of total abstinence and tried to start, unsuccessfully, a school of arts movement in Camden in 1854. His failure indicates the influence of the local gentry in relationship to the 'outsider' and foreshadows a similar relationship between gentry and 'outsider' in wartime Camden, discussed later in the thesis. Fanny Dunsford was the first single female teacher in the Camden village when she arrived in 1867 to take control of the Catholic school. Atkinson maintains that 'she was the first unmarried woman to have much authority of any kind at Camden'.²⁷

Some of the new urban dwellers in the village were able to freely mix with the Camden's pastoral gentry, such as some of the local doctors. They fitted Russell's mid-nineteenth century classification of colonial gentry in Australia. Russell maintains that there were four groups in society who asserted their claims to gentility, and the village of Camden had each of them. The first group were the 'landed gentry of England, Scotland or Ireland' from landed British families who emigrated to the colonies. Typical examples of this group were Emily Stone who married James Macarthur in 1838 and Arthur Onslow (Captain) who married Elizabeth Macarthur (James's daughter) in 1867. A second group were those 'who identified with the British gentry because of the nature of their colonial occupation' or who married into this group. Camden's doctors fell into this group. This included Edwin Chisholm (1860s)²⁸ and doctors like, Robert Crookston, of whom much more will said later in the thesis. The third group were those who 'held a significant proportion of land in the colony' and included the Macarthurs and other well-to-do landed families. The fourth group were the 'colonial merchants and bankers' who 'identified with their kind in Britain'. A number of Camden merchant families had ascended to this group by the early twentieth century, including the Whitemans, Davies and others.²⁹ Russell's gentry were the class grouping that dominated wartime voluntarism in Camden during the Boer, First and Second World Wars. Their continued domination of Camden's social relations into the twentieth century indicated that they had accumulated an enormous amount of social authority during the nineteenth century. They were able to do this because they had access to education and wealth, which in turn brought them status and power. They were able to maintain this position because of the level of conservatism amongst Camden's lower social groupings, and perhaps their willingness, or inability, to escape the

²⁷ Atkinson, *Camden*, pp. 181-3, 194-4, 227.

²⁸ Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, pp. 7-8. de Vries, *Strength of Spirit*, pp. 232-241; Chisholm was from the colonial family who owned *Gledswood*, just north of Narellan, and his nephew married into the Macarthur family. Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 198.

²⁹ Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, pp. 7-8

appropriate level of deference to the gentry. This was all part of Camden's rural ideology.

The discovery of gold in parts of New South Wales meant that businesses in Camden benefited from the increased passing trade, but this did not translate into an overall increase in the towns population. While gold stimulated the development of many new towns in New South Wales (Forbes, Grenfell, Hill End, Sofala, Gulgong) Camden continued to function as a service centre, typical of towns of its size away from the fields.³⁰ Urban growth would come with the 'dairy revolution'.

The 'dairy revolution' and the proximity of the Sydney market reinforced the position of *Camden Park* and the Macarthur family. The development of dairying had been hampered by labour intensive methods and product perishability, but even so by the mid-1800s Camden and the Illawarra were the only parts of New South Wales that had been able to specialise in dairying.³¹ *Camden Park* had had dairy maids since 1826³² and by the 1840s *Camden Park* butter was taken weekly to Sydney by spring cart, but did it face local competition from *Glenlee* and *Brownlow Hill*. By 1862 the main southern railway had reached the perimeter of *Camden Park* and increased the accessibility of the Sydney market, particularly for whole milk production.

From 1881 'a series of technical and innovations transformed the [dairy] industry', (mechanical separator, refrigeration, pasteurisation).³³ Under the guidance of Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow, who was widowed in 1882, *Camden Park* further strengthened its position. After a trip to Europe in 1877, she re-organised the estate on a share farming system. The estate established a network of creameries, which would supply the estate butter factory at Menangle (on the railway line) and an adjacent piggery. In 1899 she formed the family pastoral company, Camden Park Estate Ltd, (which is the mechanism which has ensured that the family's Regency mansion is still in the family today). Independent dairy farmers in the Camden area were also doing well and in 1880 a number of them formed a dairy co-operative at Westbrook (Mt Hunter) and erected the first butter factory in the district. By 1890 the factory was leased by the Fresh Food and Ice Company, then by the Camden

³⁰ L.J.S. Bowie & P.J. Smailes, 'The Country Town', in Heathcote, *The Australian Experience*, p. 233.

³¹ Jeans, *Historical Geography of New South Wales*, p. 251.

³² Turner & Gregory, *Camden Park*, p. 82.

³³ Jeans, *An Historical Geography of New South Wales*, p. 251.

Park Estate. In 1889 a butter factory was established at Cobbitty by the Cobbitty United Dairy Company.³⁴

Milk in the 1920s came in two forms, 'raw' and 'cold', and milk production in the Camden area was part of the competition two types. Raw milk came from the dairymen who milked twice a day and delivered it locally twice a day, still warm from the cow. Milk was still delivered like this in the villages around Camden in the 1940s. Milk coming from milk factories was chilled, pasteurised and bottled and hence called cold milk. In 1920 the Macarthur family set up the Camden Vale Milk Company to compete on the Sydney market.³⁵ It processed its milk at its Menangle and Camden factories, railed whole milk to Darling Harbour, and also sold bottled milk under its own label from 1926. In 1921 Camden Vale Milk became a co-operative, it had 162 milk suppliers and 289 cream suppliers, and between 1920 and 1922 milk received from its suppliers rose by 300 per cent. In 1928 Camden Vale merged with Dairy Farmers, but continued to sell milk under its own label. George and Francis Macarthur Onslow (Sibella's brothers) were appointed to the new board of Dairy Farmers, and James Haddin (*Camden Park* farm manager and mentioned later in the thesis) as a joint manager of the merged operation.³⁶

Social relations in Camden during this period was dominated by Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow and later her daughter, Sibella, who has a key role in the history of WVS. Elizabeth was a wealthy Victorian philanthropist, who exercised considerable economic and social authority in Camden, and who paraded her gentility on the social stages of Sydney and London. Ever aware of the need for the moral improvement of the general population, the benefits of fresh air and exercise she provided a public park where games could be played in the town. Here the lower classes could aspire to the gentlemanly conduct of the gentry, with games such as cricket. The new park memorialised the memory of her late husband, after whom it was named Onslow Park (which is now the Camden Showground). Cricket was also encouraged at *Camden Park* in the 1880s (and had a purpose built ground) as a 'healthy reformed sport which brought out the best in competitors and crowds alike'³⁷ and 'provided nostalgic reminders of the "old country"'.³⁸ The form, order and

³⁴ Sidman, 'The Town of Camden', (Facsimile Edition) p. 21.

³⁵ Francis Macarthur Onslow (Sibella's brother) was general manager.] [Major suppliers of whole milk to the Sydney market were Dairy Farmer's Co-operative, New South Wales Fresh Food and Ice Company and Farmers' and Dairymen's Milk Company.

³⁶ Todd, *Milk for the Metropolis*, pp. 84, 87, 90-92.

³⁷ Royle, *Modern Britain*, p. 257; Turner & Gregory, *Camden Park*, p. 90.

³⁸ Clive Forster, 'Cricket and Community', in Heathcote, *The Australian Experience*, p. 191.

structure of the Victorian mind was exhibited in Macarthur Onslow's creation of Macarthur Park in 1905. It was a traditional Victorian park, located in central Camden, meant for promenading and the public display of gentility.

Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow encouraged the maintenance of the proprieties of life, moral order, and good works, as well as memorialising her family by maintaining the status of Camden's Protestant churches. She donated a clock and bells to St Johns Church of England in Camden (1897), an organ to St James Church of England, Menangle (1902), amongst many other items. Her patronage and philanthropic influence extended to her consenting to be the patron of a number of worthy causes in Camden including the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Camden School of Arts, the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society, and the St John's Mother's Union.³⁹

Elizabeth, and her daughter Sibella, were women who created 'parallel paths' for themselves through their possession of independent means, yet retained their femininity, moral authority and social influence. These women helped define the public and private spheres of women in the town and completely dominated the town, socially, culturally and economically. Nothing escaped their scrutiny or influence. Their social authority was absolute.

The prosperity of Camden grew during this period and its importance usurped both Campbelltown and Picton, and the villages and hamlets that made up the district. Willis's Master's research analyses this progress and the most comprehensive statement on Camden's overall position is contained in the social survey conducted by the University of Sydney in 1948. Apart from dairying, mining contributed an enormous amount to the wealth and prosperity of the district, particularly amongst the lower social orders. Silver was discovered in 1871 (Yerrandarie), and for the next 50 years silver ore was transported to the Camden railhead by teamsters, then lorries. By the 1930s coalmining had replaced silver as a wealth generator, and was to provide an important part of the wealth and prosperity of the entire region for the next 70 years.⁴⁰

³⁹ De Vries, *Spirit of Strength*, pp. 237-240; Nixon & Hayward, *The Anglican Church of St John*, pp. 8-21.

⁴⁰ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 17-19.

A series of developments during this period indicate the level of progress enjoyed by the community. Weekly stock sales were commenced by the Inglis family (1883), the Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society started the Camden Show (1886), two weekly newspapers were established, the *Camden Times* (1879) and the *Camden News* (1880), the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney built a substantial premises on the corner of Argyle and John Streets (1877-8), a new post and telegraph office was completed (1898), a new cottage hospital was opened (1898), the town's fire brigade was formed (1900), and a telephone exchange opened (1910). Modernity was reflected by the arrival of reticulated gas (1912) and electricity (1929), the replacement of gas street lighting with electric lights (1932) and a sewerage scheme in 1939. Continued innovation and the pursuit of 'gentlemanly' past times by the Macarthur family was highlighted when Edward Macarthur Onslow (Sibella's nephew) opened a flying school on their family property, *Macquarie Grove*, in 1935 (the site of current Camden aerodrome).⁴¹

The population of Camden in 1901 was 721, which had increased from 342 in 1889, and was typical of small service centres in New South Wales. Jeans maintains that most country towns in 1901 were smaller than 750,⁴² and goes on to maintain that English visitors were surprised at the range of services available in country towns when compared to English villages of comparable size (in England farmers lived in the village).⁴³ Jeans points to the gradual depopulation of country towns setting in around this time, but Camden defied this trend and continued to grow. In the 1933 Census the population of 2394 was much larger than either Campbelltown (461) or Picton (1219).

Camden clearly benefited from its proximity to the Sydney market supplying whole milk, butter, fruit, vegetables and other agricultural products. *Camden Park* continued to dominate the local economy, and drive innovation and ideas in local agriculture and attracted investment capital from the city, but this did not stifle local business initiatives. Local residents looked to Sydney for higher order specialist services, such as some types of retailing, and under the guidance of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, to London for the latest British influences. Despite these advances, horse and cart were still used by some smallholder dairy farmers in the

⁴¹ Macarthur Onslow, *Macquarie Grove*, p. 19; Wrigley, *Camden*, 2nd Edition, pp. 33-39.

⁴² Jeans, *An Historical Geography of New South Wales*, p. 307.

⁴³ Jeans, *An Historical Geography of New South Wales*, p. 309.

1930s to take their milk to the Camden and Menangle factories, and by the local bakers for their deliveries in Camden.⁴⁴

Under the guidance of the Macarthur Onslows, the Camden community gave strong support to the Boer War, when twenty-six members of the Camden Mounted Rifles, under Major JW Macarthur Onslow (later Major General), volunteered for service in South Africa.⁴⁵ In 1900 a branch of the New South Wales Patriotic Fund was formed, with fundraising co-ordinated by the mayor, and Colonel GM Macarthur Onslow (later Brigadier General). The initial meeting of the Fund raised £107.⁴⁶ Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, a branch of the British Red Cross Society and a branch of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund were established.⁴⁷ There were also Red Cross branches in the surrounding villages of Menangle (1915), Narellan (1916), The Oaks (1915) and both Camden and The Oaks branches formed VAD in 1917.⁴⁸ The women manufactured soldier comforts, which are discussed later in the thesis. From the Camden community 215 men and four female nursing staff volunteered for active service.⁴⁹

Man-made and natural disasters are crises that form part of the cycle of rural life. Drought, floods and fires, the boom-bust cycle generated by the market place and war are part of pattern of rural life over which country towns had little control. These types of crises re-enforced the bonding effect, which has been identified within the rural ideology, when the community is forced to cope on its own with these types of collective community stress.⁵⁰

In the 1930s Camden's social stratification had changed little from 80 years previously. It was made up of gentry, the urban middle class (self-employed tradesmen, small businessmen and professionals), the rural middle class (small freeholders and leaseholders), and the working class (wage earners, blue collar occupations, and female domestics).⁵¹

⁴⁴ Howard, *The Hub of Camden*, p. 18.

⁴⁵ *Camden News*, 16 November 1899.

⁴⁶ *Camden News*, 18 January 1900.

⁴⁷ *Camden News*, 13 August 1914, 27 August 1914.

⁴⁸ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 135-6, Appendices 22-26.

⁴⁹ Names listed on the memorial gates to Macarthur Park, Camden.

⁵⁰ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 46-52.

⁵¹ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 27-29.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Camden was a conservative, rural service centre, which had a mix of general stores, farm suppliers, local garages and a range of professional and government services. The town's hinterland covered an area of over 455 square miles and had a population of more than 5,000 (see attached map). The region had a predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant population in which over 85 per cent of the community claimed British allegiance, with small groupings of Chinese, German and Italians.⁵²

Camden's class structure

The class structure of the district was the region's social framework. Peel sees class identity as 'an apprehension of difference and sameness which refers to local and wider social relationships, and to inheritance and ideas, as much as current status'. He maintains that in this sense 'class is acted out', and that the British tend to be more 'insistent' on class identification than other cultural groups.⁵³ This interpretation of class fitted pre-war Camden. Each class was made up of individuals from a similar background, with similar values and ideas. Class determined social interaction in Camden, and when combined with patriarchy was the social mechanism that defined power relationships, particularly status, prestige and social authority. Class created the region's social stratification and its origins can be clearly identified in Camden's colonial past.

ML Mason, an American sociologist, developed the model of class stratification used in this thesis. He surveyed the town's 'social class system' in 1952.⁵⁴ Researching class stratification in country towns can be difficult and controversial so Mason never fully informed the Camden community of the real intent of his research. He also disguised the town's identity in his final work as many other sociological studies have done to allay any controversy.⁵⁵ There has been, and still is, a reticence on the part of the Camden community to openly discuss its class stratification.⁵⁶

⁵² Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 22-25.

⁵³ Peel, *Good Times, Hard Times*, p. 94.

⁵⁴ Mason, Carinya.

⁵⁵ For instance, Dempsey, *Smalltown*; Wild, *Bradstow*.

⁵⁶ Mason's Carinya only came to light in recent months. Hints had been given by me about 'an American' sociologist who stayed in the town in early 1950s. Some people had seen a copy of the study 'years ago', but knew nothing else. After I read the thesis I raised it with one source. Despite

Mason concluded from studying 659 families that Camden had a five-tier class structure, which was determined by occupation, amount and source of income, education, housing type and neighbourhood.⁵⁷ He described the classes as gentry and upper-class (0.15 per cent of the population), upper-middle class (6.39 per cent), lower-middle class (47.95 per cent), working class (41.70 per cent), and 'no-hoppers' (3.81 per cent).⁵⁸ Within the wider district other factors which determined class included land ownership, colonial family associations and location.⁵⁹

The gentry and upper-class, according to Mason, were 'the social elite of the area' and were characterised by their 'close association with the history of the district...and the ownership of historic properties', their 'wealth - real or alleged' and their 'etiquette and education'. The 'prestige and influence' of the families in this grouping were in 'sharp contrast to their numbers'. This was the only class grouping where education was used to determine the status of a family. Their children were educated at 'selected private schools in Australia, and in some instances Oxford, Cambridge and/or the English colleges'. Social events in Camden were 'tangential to their main social life which [was] associated with the metropolis', and as well, 'a large number of males' in this class grouping were 'high ranking military officers'.⁶⁰

Mason defined the upper-middle class as 'successful businessmen and higher ranking officials'. The town's doctors and bank managers were automatically included in this group while other individuals had to combine 'sound, conservative business practices with the claim to a pioneer business family tradition.' The members of the upper middle class supplied 'leadership and financial support for civic and charitable causes and organisations'. A number of them were affiliated with 'the Non-conformist faith', particularly those who belonged to the 'pioneer businessmen'.⁶¹

Camden's lower-middle class consisted of the 'respectable and enterprising smaller businessman and superior artisan'. Mason maintained that the lower-middle class

being forthcoming on other matter, he refused to discuss it, only stating that 'I came up alright!' whereas 'others were not so lucky'. CC, Interview, Camden, 23 March 2001.

^{57.} Mason, Carinya, pp. 151-156.

^{58.} Mason, Carinya, pp. 133-141, 203.

^{59.} Willis, War and Community.

^{60.} Mason, Carinya, pp. 133-136, 142-3.

^{61.} Mason, Carinya, pp. 136-138, 142-3.

was characterised by 'individuals and families' who achieved 'respect and prestige by a reputation for honesty in business effort, a high degree of personal morality, and by their devotion to religious and civic causes'.⁶²

The working class consisted of 'very small shopkeepers, the shop clerks, the average skilled tradesman and the "honest labourer"'. Mason maintained that although members of the working class were 'active in the sporting bodies of the town...they lacked the ambition and enthusiasm for civic projects' that characterised the lower-middle class. Mason's sources claimed that those in this class had an inability 'to make money', their accomplishments were 'negligible' and their wives lacked 'social ambition'.⁶³

The 'no-hopers' were, according to Mason, 'beyond the pale of respectability' and were classified by his sources as 'social outcasts'. They were 'considered socially, morally and financially irresponsible' by the remainder of the community.⁶⁴

Mason's identification and description of the town's class system matches the social stratification model developed for the study of the Camden Red Cross.⁶⁵ Camden's class structure changed little between the late 1930s and 1952 and the same stratification is identifiable amongst Camden's pioneer families today.

Mason also identified a direct link between religious affiliation and Camden's class groupings. Catholics were essentially working class; the Methodist and Presbyterians were mostly confined to the lower-middle and working classes. Methodism was brought to the region in the 1830s, when the Macarthur family brought numerous Methodist families to Australia to work on *Camden Park*.⁶⁶ Methodism was particularly strong amongst the local dairyfarmers and business community. The higher status groups tended to belong to the Church of England.⁶⁷ My earlier research identified a further link between religious affiliation and location. Not only were Roman Catholic families predominantly in the western parts of the district, they

⁶² Mason, Carinya, pp. 138-140, 142-3.

⁶³ Mason, Carinya, pp. 140-1, 143.

⁶⁴ Mason, Carinya, pp. 141, 143.

⁶⁵ Willis, *War and Community*.

⁶⁶ For instance, Wrigley & Nixon, *They Worked At Camden Park*, p. 28; Atkinson, *Camden*, p. 217.

⁶⁷ Mason, Carinya, pp. 220-223.

were concentrated in the Burragorang Valley.⁶⁸ There was also a link between religion and voluntary organisations. These were dominated by Protestant membership, especially in the higher status women's organisations like the Red Cross.⁶⁹ The thesis will also show later that the Methodists exercised an influence on moral issues far beyond their numbers.

An important part of Camden's class structure was the social networks that crossed the district. These were based on kinship and personal contact and were largely confined within class and religious boundaries. Mason found that families retained their class status despite changes in income or wealth.⁷⁰ Atkinson found that marriages tended to be based on class. Rarely did men or women marry outside their class.⁷¹ So pervasive was this system that it extended into Camden's voluntary and other organisations.

Within Camden's class groupings there were a number of loose alliances that functioned as cliques. They were found in the sporting clubs and the trade union movement but the groups most relevant to this thesis were the cliques associated with the gentry and upper middle class, Camden's elite. They dominated Camden's principal male and female voluntary organisations related to philanthropy, farming and politics. Conservative, Protestant, British-Australian, they supported the existing power structures, and their own status and social authority within them. Mason found that higher status individuals held office in local organisations 'out of all proportion to their numbers',⁷² a point supported by the study of Camden's Red Cross.⁷³

The Camden elite saw class as a natural part of the district's social makeup. Wealth and privilege brought with it social obligations and responsibility, a *noblesse oblige*, which found expression in volunteering and philanthropy. This was particularly marked amongst the women who established many organisations in the town and district, including the Mother's Union (1900), the Ladies Church Aid (1911), the Red Cross (1914), the CWA (1930) and the Hospital Auxiliary (1933). These women

⁶⁸ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 30-33.

⁶⁹ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 27-33.

⁷⁰ Mason, Carinya, See Chapter Four, particularly pp. 141-2.

⁷¹ See Atkinson, *Camden*, Chapter Seven for analysis of marriages in the district in the 1800s;

Burnett, *Camden Pioneer Register*, Mason, Carinya., pp. 133-135.

⁷² Mason, Carinya, p. 223.

⁷³ Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 39-46.

matched the portrait set out in Chapter 1. They strongly believed in home and domestic harmony and like their peers in Britain, devoted 'great energies' to philanthropy.⁷⁴ They gained a 'public persona' through their work and expressed their independence, while at the same time upholding Victorian values of femininity and respectability. These organisations allowed the women from Camden's elite to cross over the boundaries between Camden's private and public space without challenging Camden's patriarchy. Volunteering for these organisations was also closely associated with the women's social authority as well as nationalism, patriotism and Camden's rural ideology.

The social authority of the female elite rested on their wealth, their education, their husband's social position and their accumulated experience of volunteering during the Boer and First World War conflicts. They exercised their social authority through personal and kinship networks, which was strengthened as the number of organisations grew. These women were a tight knit group of close friends, a clique that effectively controlled all public matters that affected Camden women. It was a natural part of their class to receive public recognition and individual kudos for their effort in community affairs. They developed their own 'parallel power structures'. They reflected Alston's argument that their power was an 'important aspect of women's collusion and acceptance of their subordination': the private power they held in the domestic sphere explained their support for the ideology of male hegemony.⁷⁵ Religion was also an important element within the female clique and it took the form of an evangelical Protestantism.

Sibella Macarthur Onslow was the dominant person in Camden's female clique. She had a regal status in Camden, a 'Lady Bountiful' figure.⁷⁶ She was the most powerful person in Camden, moved freely between Camden's private and public space, exercising considerable influence over people's lives. Her role in Camden's female philanthropy is explored in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Parochialism and conservatism

⁷⁴ Royle, *Modern Britain*, p. 260.

⁷⁵ Alston, *Women on the Land*, pp. 24-28.

⁷⁶ Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful'.

The small size of Camden meant that the social networks ensured that there was a high degree of knowledge about an individual's activities circulating within the town and region. Localness, 'friendship, family and neighbourliness'⁷⁷ were central to Camden's social fabric.⁷⁸ According to McIntyre and McIntyre they were the essence of life in Australian country towns.⁷⁹ These are the *gemeinschaft* type relations, which exist 'in small, close communities, where all the members have known each other for a long time, and have close bonds of identification with one another and with the institutions of the community'.⁸⁰ They also lay behind the definitions of who was a 'local' and who was a 'blow-in' and an 'outsider'.⁸¹ The 'outsider' was different to the 'blow-in', and even each of these terms was subject to differences in interpretation. One type of 'outsider' was the representative of bodies from outside the local area who attempted to impose values, attitudes or regulations on the local community. These were the type of individuals identified by Patmore in Chapter One. They were seen as different and posed a threat or challenge to the unity of the district, its rural ideology and its sense of place.⁸² In this respect 'outsiders' from Sydney were particularly suspect. Matching the pattern described in Chapter One, relations in Camden were based on trust and reciprocity in face-to-face contact. 'City' relationships were based on 'arm's length' contractual relationships associated with capitalism and the market place. To work effectively with a local community, empathy and an understanding of the intimacies and subtleties of personal relationships were required. Some 'city types' seemed to lack the patience to achieve this and often gave the impression that they 'knew best', even if their proposals ran contrary to the way the community had ordered its priorities and its local affairs. This was seen as an attack on community identity and was met with resistance and hostility, as the 'city types' of Sydney and Canberra would discover during their prosecution of the war effort in Camden.

Yet, an 'outsider' could be embraced by the local community. These were the people who showed sympathetic understanding towards a local cause (as shown in Chapter Nine) and an empathy with local custom and practice. Alternatively they were sponsored by a prominent local identity, such as one of Camden's elite. Mason, for

⁷⁷ Teather, 'Remote Rural Women's Ideologies, Spaces and Networks', p. 375.

⁷⁸ Willis, *War and Community*, particularly Chapter 2.

⁷⁹ McIntyre & McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, p. 271.

⁸⁰ James S. Colman, 'Community Disorganisation and Urban Problems', in Merton and Nisbet, *Contemporary Social Problems*, p. 563.

⁸¹ McIntyre & McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, p. 266; Patmore, 'Localism and Industrial Conflict', p. 58.

⁸² For a fuller discussion of people's emotional attachment to place, see Read, *Returning to Nothing*; Read, *Belonging*; Breen, *Contested Places*.

example, was able to undertake his research because the Camden Rotary Club sponsored him. He and his wife lived with a prominent 'local' person and stayed in the community for several months. It gave him unlimited access to those he needed for his study. He was not unique. This thesis provides wartime examples of the way some outside initiatives were taken up in Camden because they had the support of the community's elite.

The 'blow ins' and 'blow outs', or 'spiralists', as Montague refers to them, were an 'impermanent population' in the community. 'Blow ins' included teachers, clergymen, bank and post office employees, police and other government officials, who were regularly moved around rural areas. Their career aspirations were such that any promotion meant being transferred out of Camden to another location. Generally speaking they had their 'aspirations and social horizons firmly fixed beyond the local area'. 'Blow ins' tended to be employed in 'highly visible' positions in the community where 'locals' made judgements about their work 'coloured' by views about 'their private lives'. They were never fully integrated into the local community because they would only spend five to ten years in the town, and often felt themselves to be 'outsiders', even if they embraced local traditions and customs. McIntyre and McIntyre make the point that although 'locals' were friendly towards them, the 'blow ins' had difficulty breaking into the tightly knit social groupings of local families, typical of country towns. 'Blow ins' were usually better educated, had broader life experiences and possessed more sophisticated 'social ways about them'.⁸³ They often brought new ideas, challenged the conservatism associated with Camden's rural ideology and assumed leadership roles as progressives in the community (as shown in Chapter Nine). However, the 'blow in' who stayed long enough, demonstrated an empathy with local causes and became actively involved in local voluntary organisations, could bridge the gap and be, eventually, accepted as a 'local'. A number of these individuals are discussed in the thesis.

Camden's parochialism, of course, worked at different levels. Although there was a common perception by individuals that they were part of an identifiable area called 'Camden' they were also aware that they belonged to sub-regional identities. These were based on matters like isolation, poor transport and communications, family ties,

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M.M. Montague, 'Barcaldine: A Queensland rural community', in Burnley, Pryor and Rowland, *Mobility and Community Change in Australia*, pp. 24-26; McIntyre and McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp. 266-267.

sectarianism, class and economic factors. They created a psychological distance between hamlets and villages in the region. As any historian of rural Australia knows, this often found its expression in local sporting competitions. As well the loyalties of those on the margins of the district were always a bit suspect: those who lived near the Main Southern Railway had quick and easy access to places outside the region. Yet, local loyalties and sense of place never replaced the notion that they lived in 'Camden', especially whenever the 'outsiders' arrived to tell the locals what they should be doing.⁸⁴

Local communities had a history of proud independence and self-reliance based on common experiences, particularly natural hazards such as drought, floods and bushfires. Periods of crises forced the communities to forge a bond of mutual assistance, which strengthened their emotional attachment to their location, their community identity and their parochialism. These experiences were part of the 'pioneer spirit' within Camden's rural ideology, and increased the resistance of the community to any interfering 'outsiders'. Another expression of parochialism, which is taken up by the thesis, is the proud support these communities gave their men they sent to war.

In 1939 Camden was a conservative society. Recent arrivals or 'blow ins' could spend most of their lives in the community, and for various reasons, never be considered a true 'local' unless they demonstrated an empathy with local issues and were actively involved in local organisations. The community reserved the term 'local' for members of families who had been in the district for a number of generations, and possessed a distinct tribal or clan loyalty. They were usually confined to one class stratum, a particular religion, and more often than not, one geographic location. The high levels of intimacy in the district's social networks acted as a means of social cohesion that could also limit the behaviour of individuals. Fear of shame would usually be sufficient to ensure compliance with the acceptable standard of behaviour, standards set by the community's elite.

Camden's conservatism was part of its rural ideology and was expressed as a general desire to maintain the status quo. It reinforced the town's class structure. The elite protected the existing power structure and their social authority based on their self-

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This material has been drawn from Willis, *War and Community*.

interest and exclusivity. Working class conservatism reflected its members insecurity, lack of education, limited lifestyle opportunities, lack of sophistication and an inability to change either their social or economic situation. As a result Camden's working class were marginalised from positions of power in the town, and had little input into important public decision making in the community. Conservatism meant that gender categorisations and expectations were rigidly enforced within the community. One of the key processes for maintenance of gender roles was patriarchy. This was all part of Camden's rural ideology, which has been discussed earlier. Camden's female elite supported these social conventions and ensured the maintenance of the status quo.

As Teather has noted, rural conservatism was best expressed in 'terminology and modes of address ('ladies' rather than 'women') and preferred style of operating and reiteration of central values (for example, a British heritage).'⁸⁵ Camden certainly matched the model. Women were 'ladies', men were 'gentlemen'. The preferred modes of address in the minutes and records of most organisations were the use of formal titles - 'Mrs, Miss, Mr and Dr'. Respect and deference to others was based on social rank, age, wealth, and education, all stemming from Victorian culture.

Camden's parochialism, its conservatism and its rural ideology were reflected by the town's two newspapers, the *Camden News* (1895) and *Camden Advertiser* (1935). Both newspapers were based in Camden and were owned by conservative middle class men, George Sidman and Arthur Gibson.⁸⁶ The contents of the papers, the way they reported material and what they reported reflected both assumptions about an ideal rural community and how Camden's rural ideology encompassed all aspects of life.

Both newspapers 'reflect[ed] and...perpetuate[d] the personal elements which [gave] rural community life cohesiveness and local significance' by publishing news and publicising events that were locally based. The newspapers reported items, which were associated with local kinship groupings such as births, deaths, engagements and marriages, as well as the comings and goings of local individuals. In this way the newspapers extended the intimacy of the district's social networks into the public

^{85.} Teather, 'The First Rural Women's Network in New South Wales', p. 169.

^{86.} Willis, 'Active Citizens and Loyal Patriots'.

arena and helped to reinforce 'the closely-knit...web of personal knowledge'⁸⁷ that was part of the community's social cohesion. Both newspapers published extensive reports on events in Camden, which gave those in the outlying parts of the district 'a feeling of unity with the town', all of which contributed to regional identity.⁸⁸ Both newspapers encouraged the community to take ownership of the past. They did this by publishing articles on Camden's colonial past and its 'pioneers', and in doing so reinforced the 'attachment to place' and the area's regional identity.

This process was especially marked during times of war. From the days of the Boer War, the *Camden News* for example, had localised and personalised the homefront war effort and promoted patriotic fundraising by publishing the names and addresses of donors to patriotic appeals. It also published the amount donated. This combination of localness and coercion was a powerful tool to pressure the community to support patriotic causes. The amount donated was often equated with a person's level of patriotism. It was form of fiscal patriotism. The *Camden News* also published honour rolls of the local men serving and published soldier's letters sent home from the front.⁸⁹ These letters were a direct extension of Camden's social networks and helped maintain the level of morale on the front line and at 'home'. In the hands of their astute owners, the local newspapers were a powerful tool in the mobilisation of active wartime citizenship.

A Brief Overview of the War

War, like natural disasters, is another type of crisis that creates collective stress that can have the same type of social effects. Sociological research has identified a number of stages in crises and the social processes that result from them, and has been briefly examined in Willis's Master's research.⁹⁰ Historians maintain that the

⁸⁷ McIntyre & McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp. 246-254.
⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ During the First World War a list of 'Our Heroes' first appeared in the *Camden News* on 22 July 1915. This occurred after the death of Colonel A.J. Onslow Thompson at the Gallipoli landing and a letter from Major G.M. Macarthur Onslow stating, 'don't let it be said that Camden is backward in sending her sons to fight for the Empire.' *Camden News*, 10 June 1915.

⁹⁰ Barton and Drabek identified a five stage response by communities, which can be summarised as planning, warning, evacuation, emergency action, restoration and reconstruction. Barton, *Communities in Disasters*, p. 49; Drabek, *Human System Response to Disaster*, pp. xi-xvii; Poiner identified three stages in a study of a Marulan bushfire, they were the warning stage, a period of acute stress and the aftermath. Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*, pp. 159-160; Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 46-49.

war fell into four phases, the phoney war (September 1939-April 1940), then increased involvement (April 1940-December 1941), total war (December 1941-June 1943) and lastly, victory assured (June 1943-September 1945).⁹¹ These are the broad time periods that have been adopted for the purposes of this overview. Like other country centres,⁹² people's attitudes in Camden to the war changed over its course, as did their social behaviour, depending on the progress of the war, its proximity, government policy decisions, local civilian and military activity, and Camden's rural ideology.

Amongst those in Camden who recognised the imminent threat of the impending 'emergency' were the women who formed the WVS in April 1939. It was Camden's first war-specific voluntary organisation for the Second World War. The WVS, in conjunction with the Red Cross, implemented a number of training courses, most notably through the re-formation of the VAD. In addition these women used their experience of the First World War to re-activate the Red Cross weekly sewing meetings and the manufacture of comforts.

After an initial burst of activity in September after the declaration of war the Menzie's Government declared that it was 'business as usual'. This was paralleled in Camden and shortly after the declaration of war the mayor, Stan Kelloway, was made chief warden and the local representative of the National Emergency Services. With no perceived 'emergency' there was little enthusiasm shown for a call for wardens. This period was known locally as the '9-5' or 'phoney war', and even the local military establishments would 'shut down on weekends'. The general perception by the community of this period was that it was low key and 'over there'. Despite this, Camden women used their '1914-18 experience' and continued fundraising activities for patriotic causes, a pattern which was followed in country towns all over New South Wales.

Two major military facilities were established in the Camden area during the early part of the war. Not unlike other country towns (Goulburn, Townsville, Albury, Greta, Temora and many others)⁹³ Camden experienced the presence of military personnel in the local area, and the financial benefits that they brought to the town.

⁹¹ For instance, Hasluck, McKernan, Peel and others.

⁹² Peel, *The Voluntary War Effort*, p. 31.

⁹³ Pennay, *On the Home Front*, pp. 2-9; McIntyre, *Townsville*, especially Chapter 6; Keating, *Greta*; Maslin, *Wings Over Temora*.

An infantry training school for non-commissioned officers was established at *Studley Park*, Narellan in October 1939, followed six months later by an air force flying school at Camden aerodrome. Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) operations did not seriously effect the activities of a number of civilian aircraft, but there was an immediate influx of 'flash' airmen at local dances, cafes and hotels. The army non-commissioned officers at *Studley Park* only had limited interaction with the community because of the short nature of their courses and the small number of personnel.

The most important marker in the early stage of the war was the defeat of British forces at Dunkirk in May 1940, followed by the Battle of Britain. Dunkirk, in particular, was a psychological shock to the Camden community, which wore its Britishness 'on its sleeve'. There was an immediate response by Camden males. A public meeting was called by the Camden Returned Soldier's Fraternity, which passed patriotic motions, formed the Camden Soldier's and Citizen's Association (patron, Major General JW Macarthur Onslow) and decided to organise a series of soldier's farewells. During the following eight weeks there was active public recruiting for the 7th Division, the names of men enlisting were placed in both local newspapers as 'Honor Rolls', a Win the War League was formed at Werombi and *Camden Park Estate Pty Ltd* forwarded £10,000 to the Commonwealth treasury as a loan. As well an RAAF comforts fund was established, the first soldier's farewell was held, a dry canteen was founded by the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society at the showground, the Camden sub-branch of Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia was re-formed, the *Camden News* sponsored 'a Dive Bomber Plane' and salvage collection commenced. All of these activities were originated by men. This type of response in country towns was not isolated to Camden and similar responses occurred in Colac, Milton-Ulladulla, Eden, Cohuna, Whyalla and Mildura.⁹⁴

In October 1940 the army established an infantry camp at Narellan. The camp was a general infantry training and mobilisation facility and thousands of men passed through it. These men were not as welcome in the town area as airmen and were discouraged from coming into Camden by both local and military authorities. The airforce had already claimed Camden as a leave location, and in any case most

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Peel, *The Voluntary War Effort*, p. 31; McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp. 278-9; McAndrew, *Milton Ulladulla in the Wars*, p. 173; Baker, Barty, Gow, Norris & Sutherland, *Eden and the Second World War*, p. 10; Stanley, 'Don't let Whyalla Down', p. 25.

soldiers were attracted by the 'bright lights' of Sydney while on leave. As the war progressed the military presence across the area increased. The army took control of Camden showground and other locations, soldiers would regularly be seen in marching formation on local roads, undertaking manoeuvres and occasionally in military parades through Camden. As well some local firms benefited from supply contracts with the camps, as did other country towns, such as Albury.⁹⁵

Women continued their good works based on the belief that they 'were doing their bit for the war effort'. Domestic duties from the private sphere such as sewing, knitting and cooking became a national priority, a form of patriotic housekeeping. The WVS launched its British mobile canteen fund, the Camden Red Cross launched its Prisoner of War Appeal and the first fundraising dance was held to aid the Catholic United Services Auxiliary. The women also carried on their street stalls, gymkhanas, carnivals, button days, collections and other activities to raise funds for patriotic causes.

By 1941 the Agricultural, Industrial and Horticultural Society decided to abandon the annual show (although a contributing factor was the parlous state of the society's finances). By May the weekly 'Honor Roll' in the *Camden News* listed 148 names of Camden men on active service, but no women, and the paper also reported Camden's first casualty, Private Ernest McGrath, was killed in action in Egypt. Overseas events were still quite important and a fundraising 'Blitz Dance' was held at the Empire Hall. The *Camden News* reported on a local airman who had progressed through the Empire Training Scheme in Canada and was flying with an RAF squadron.⁹⁶

In June 1941 the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA) authorised the formation of volunteer defence units, and there was a call for a 'defence corps or home guard'. This was not unique and similar units were established at Colac, Warrnambool, Whyalla, Milton, Eden⁹⁷ and other country centres. The local S4 division was under the command of First World War veteran Edgar Downes (Captain), and covered Camden, Campbelltown and Picton areas. The prime purpose of the corps was to protect Cataract and Cordeaux Dams (part of the Sydney water supply system) and the portion of the water supply canal that ran

⁹⁵ Pennay, *On the Home Front*, p. 8.

⁹⁶ *Camden News* 12 June 1941.

⁹⁷ Peel, *The Voluntary War Effort*, pp. 126; Stanley, 'Don't Let Whyalla Down', pp. 56; Andrew, *Milton-Ulladulla*, p. 170; Baker, et. al, *Eden*, p. 10.

through the local area. The corps had 77 members, which Downes wanted to increase to 125, and trained on Tuesday nights at the agricultural hall in Camden.⁹⁸ The Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) became part of the military in early 1941, and the local unit became the 11th Battalion VDC. A mounted horse unit was formed in April 1942 as an auxiliary to the VDC, but there was only a 'languid response'⁹⁹ and it disappeared from view.

With increasing tensions in Southeast Asia, there were the first signs of an impending emergency in the middle of 1941. Donald Howard, a Camden resident, felt that 'Camden like the rest of Australia knew that sooner or later we would be "for it"'.¹⁰⁰ By August Camden was declared a 'vulnerable area' and the town had its first blackout test. In the November the King George VI requested a National Day of Prayer.

The Camden community would have agreed with Michael McKernan's view that December 1941 was a 'black month for Australians'. The destroyer *Sydney* had been lost, Japan officially entered the war and Prime Minister Curtin told the nation 'We are at war'.¹⁰¹ For the first time there were signs that the local population were seriously worried by the progress of the war. There was also a flurry of activity by the Camden National Emergency Services. There was an urgent call for wardens, there were civil defence meetings and training sessions, sand dumps were established in case of incendiary bombs and street lighting was reduced. As well, there was increased sand bagging at Camden Hospital, police were instructed to strictly enforce fuel regulations that forbid business vehicles from being driven other than for business purposes and a ban was imposed on the public inspection of council minutes, as they contained details of 'defence work'. In addition a ban was imposed on display advertising, sirens and any open air lighting and Furner Bros, general merchants, advertised in the *Camden Advertiser* that residents could purchase their National Emergency Services (NES) requisites from them ('blackout paper, long handled shovels, hand rakes, bucket spray pumps, thermos flask, kerosene stoves...')¹⁰² Local motorists, 'who were feeling the pinch' from petrol

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Camden News 12 June 1941.

99

de Matos, 'When the War Came to Campbelltown', p. 29.

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Howard, *The Hub of Camden*, p. 25.

101

McKernan, *All In!*, pp. 96-97.

102

Camden Advertiser 17 January 1942.

restrictions, could install a 'Penderick' gas converter at Adams and Crick's garage for around £50,¹⁰³ with charcoal available from Nepean Shire Council.

In February 1942 plans were drawn up for the town's evacuation and a scorched earth policy committee was formed in Camden. Plans were in hand, under the chief ranger, ANH Downes, for the evacuation of 14,212 dairy cows, 1,945 horses and other livestock from the district through Burragorang Valley to Oberon, while 208,000 slaughtered chickens would be consigned to cold storage.¹⁰⁴ Helen Stewardson wrote to her brother, Harry, an airman in England, 'I guess you hear the news the same as we do, it is rather disheartening, but we hope for the best'.¹⁰⁵

The Fall of Singapore worried the community and more air raid tests followed. As well, questions were asked at the Fair Rent Board held at Camden courthouse over rent profiteering in the town. Camden was seeing increasing numbers of Sydneysiders moving away from the coast and local accommodation was a premium, with women and children only able to find single rooms to rent. The first air raids on the Australian mainland were recorded at Darwin, and the Department of Home Security distributed a pamphlet in Camden called 'If Invasion Comes'.¹⁰⁶ The King called for a 'Special Day of Prayer' on 29 March, and 'every shop in Camden was shut', while their owners and staff went off to church to pray.¹⁰⁷

Camden Municipal Council claimed that evacuation plans were overly complex and in a state of 'confusion', so it decided to take no action on an evacuation register. This confusion continued and the council took until November to appoint a delegate to the regional evacuation organisation, which included the council areas for Camden, Ingleburn, Cabramatta, Nepean and Liverpool (although, in March the council did comply with a request to remove local traffic signs 'as a precaution against invasion').¹⁰⁸ In the meantime, the proprietors of essential services (coalmines and dairy farmers) were given detailed instructions by the authorities on the appropriate methods of making equipment unusable by any invading force.

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Camden Municipal Council, Minutes, 8 June 1942.

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Camden Advertiser 19 February 1942, *Camden News* 19 February 1942.

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Vernon, 'Letters to an Airmen', p. 56.

¹⁰⁶

Camden News 19 March 1942.

¹⁰⁷

Howard, *The Hub of Camden*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁸

CMC, Minutes, 9 March 1942, 23 March 1942, 23 November 1942.

An emergency telephone was installed at the First Aid Post at Camden hospital and an air shelter was constructed at Camden Public School with a capacity for 300 people.¹⁰⁹ Each house had to 'stick blackout paper on the windows, [which then] had to be covered with a broad lattice of muslin strips to prevent glass splintering when bombs fell'.¹¹⁰ Tensions were heightened when Japanese mini-submarines entered Sydney Harbour in May 1942, and the local emergency services boasted about their efficient response to the 'emergency'. Within fifteen minutes of the alarm being raised in the town, the VAD and nurses had reported for duty at the Camden hospital first aid post, the town's gas and electricity were turned off, wardens and decontamination squads were ready for action, but unfortunately for everyone concerned their enthusiasm was not to be rewarded, they were all stood down within an hour and there were no casualties.¹¹¹ A Civilian Register was established and Camden residents, like all civilian British subjects, were required to register for identity cards. The Civilian War Emergency Aid Service, which came under the jurisdiction New Wales Government, was established to cater for people who were made homeless by air raids and more air raid tests were held.

In March 1942 there was a collective sigh of relief by the nation and Helen Stewardson wrote to Harry that she hoped that 'General Macarthur will pep things up a bit'. She re-assured Harry that 'the RAAF is doing marvellous work over New Guinea', and that things at 'home' were looking up. In April she wrote, 'if you have the news you will know that we are not quite so alone as we seemed to be then. The Yanks are here'. She told him that 'Everything is going O.K. here and you must not worry needlessly'.¹¹²

In April 1942 members of the local community volunteered to staff the observation post in Macarthur Park for the newly formed Volunteer Air Observers Corps. Similar observations posts, under the control of the RAAF, were established in other country towns like Menangle, Albury, Wodonga, Whyalla, Colac, Eden and Milton.¹¹³ In Camden observers were organised by the RSSAILA, with Michael Brien, a storekeeper, in charge. The chief observer, Harold Lowe, reported that in

¹⁰⁹ *Camden News* 14 March 1942.

¹¹⁰ Howard, *The Hub of Camden*, p. 26.

¹¹¹ *Camden News* 11 June 1942.

¹¹² Vernon, 'Letters to an Airmen', pp. 56-57.

¹¹³ Pennay, *On the Home Front*, p. 17; Stanley, 'Don't Let Whyalla Down', pp. 60, 96; Peel, *The Voluntary War Effort*, pp. 143-147; Baker, et. al, *Eden*, p. 10; Andrew, *Milton-Ulladulla*, p. 170.

nineteen months to November 1944, the observers had spotted 1600 plane movements, mainly from Camden aerodrome.¹¹⁴

The town won a pennant in the Liberty Loan campaign in March 1943, and the WVS continued to supply weekly comforts to Camden soldiers at the front and send them parcels at Christmas. The Red Cross continued to raise funds for Prisoners of War, held an extremely successful Baby Competition in May, and its long-term president, Sibella Macarthur Onslow, died in July.

Relations with the local military were not always harmonious and misbehaviour and drunkenness were not uncommon. In August 1942, the council was concerned about 'maintaining order and decency in the town'. Complaints had been made about troops from Narellan urinating in public in the town area after local dances and when the hotels closed at six o'clock. The commanding officer at the Narellan camp, Major ES Vidal, wanted 'additional sanitary conveniences', but the council's response was to request that 'military police be substantially increased to ensure proper control of troops in the town'.¹¹⁵ 'Misdemeanours' by the Narellan troops were not confined to Camden, and similar complaints were received in Campbelltown.¹¹⁶ A more serious incident occurred in January 1943, when troops from the Sydney area turned up in Camden one Sunday afternoon on a 'pub crawl'. Eleven were arrested and later appeared in court. The incident led to the foundation of the hospitality centre, which is examined in greater detail in Chapter Nine. Similar incidents occurred in other country towns which hosted large numbers of troops, such as Albury, where military police patrolled the town. This situation was particularly applicable to garrison towns like Townsville and Greta.¹¹⁷

Sport was one way of encouraging cordial relations between the military and the Camden community. (such as those outlined with RAF airmen in Chapter Nine) In 1943 Albert Baker, a local barber, formed the Camden Soccer Club and encouraged Sunday matches between the local civilian and military. Sunday sport had always been a contentious issue in Camden from 1925 when the council had banned Sunday sport at Onslow Park. This occasion was no different. There were objections from the Methodist community, as there had been by Reverend Putland, the Methodist

¹¹⁴ *Camden News*, 23 November 1944.

¹¹⁵ CMC, Correspondence, 21 August 1942; *Camden News* 27 August 1942.

¹¹⁶ de Matos, 'When the War Came to Campbelltown', p. 25.

¹¹⁷ Pennay, *On the Home Front*, p. 30; McIntyre, *Townsville*, pp. 80-98; Keating, *Greta*, pp. 25-29.

minister, to Sunday cricket in 1941.¹¹⁸ A motion to rescind the Sunday sport ban was discussed in council and was considered 'too hot to handle'. The solution was a referendum. The opposing camps divided on religious lines. The Methodists conducted the 'No' campaign and handed out literature in Argyle Street. The 'Yes' vote was supported by the soccer club, St John's Church of England and their supporters. There were heated letters in the *Camden News*, but George Sidman, its owner and an active Methodist, remained impartial during the whole debate. Eventually commonsense prevailed and the result was a resounding 'Yes', with 393 votes, to 197 'No' votes, and as far as Sidman was concerned that was the end of the matter. The soccer competition proved to be a complete success.¹¹⁹ Similar problems did not exist in Temora, where RAAF airmen became involved in cricket and tennis, and Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force (WAAAF) personnel played basketball, or Albury where the military joined local competitions.¹²⁰

The wartime rationing and shortages of foodstuffs were less severe in country areas, like Camden, because 'local farms supplied dairy produce, fruit and vegetables, and townspeople also kept fruit trees, grew vegetables and kept fowls in their backyards'.¹²¹ Rationing of tea, sugar and tobacco posed greater difficulty, and local voluntary organisations requested the pooling of coupons so they could purchase supplies. In June 1942 Camden bakers had 'blocked runs' introduced to stop 'overlapping in deliveries' and the town was split between Stuckey Bros and Tomkins Bros, much to the objection of some customers. Frank Stuckey recalled that beef dripping replaced butter and margarine, and glycerine was 'eked out' because of sugar shortages.¹²² For Don Howard this was remembered as 'the ban on pink icing'.¹²³ In August Camden butchers requested that their customers should bring their own paper if they wanted their meat wrapped.¹²⁴

The increasing pressure on resources meant that farmers had to apply to the local War Agricultural Committee for farming supplies. With local farmers supplying military contracts a shortage of pea pickers in September 1942 was a serious affair.¹²⁵ Farmers were relieved with the appearance of the Australian Land Army in

¹¹⁸ *Camden News* 13 March 1941.

¹¹⁹ *Camden News* 1 July 1943, 15 July 1943, 22 July 1943, 29 July 1943, 5 August 1943.

¹²⁰ Maslin, *Wings Over Temora*, p. 29; Pennay, *On the Home Front*, p. 32.

¹²¹ Gay Eivers, 'Pemberton Goes to War', in Gregory, *On the Homefront*, p. 16.

¹²² Stuckey, *Our Daily Bread*, pp. 26-27.

¹²³ Howard, *The Hub of Camden*, p. 25.

¹²⁴ *Camden Advertiser* 6 August 1942.

¹²⁵ *Camden News* 17 September 1942.

the district for the first time in October at Menangle Park.¹²⁶ These young women helped relieve the rural labour shortage, and also married a number of local farmers.

For a significant portion of the local population the crisis had passed by April 1943 and the town entered the aftermath period. The National Emergency Services and Air Raid Precaution activity declined, and there was a lifting of the 'brown out' conditions in the town. The patriotic effort of the women's voluntary organisations continued: the CWA organised the making of camouflage nets, the WVS sent comforts parcels to Camden troops and the Red Cross continued its weekly sewing workshops until August 1946.

As victory was assured, the organisations that the war had generated closed down. The Civilian Aid Service was disbanded in October 1944, and in 1945 the Volunteer Air Observers Corps (VAOC) and the WVS were wound up, and the VDC was stood down, all without much public notice. The town's focus turned to the returning prisoners of war (POWs), the drought, and the welcome return of normality. The women's auxiliary of the RSSAILA was formed in mid-1945, and the town celebrated victory in August 1945 with a night of entertainment, which attracted 800 people in Argyle Street. In 1946 there was the official welcome home for the troops. As well there was the death of James Macarthur Onslow (Sibella's brother), which marked the generational change occurring within the Macarthur Onslow family and the town.

The high levels of wartime production at the Burragorang coalmines meant that many benefited from the increased prosperity this brought to the local area, including the mine owners, the miners who lived in Camden and the surrounding villages, and local transport companies. Mining was classified as an essential industry and the associated jobs, like farming, were reserved occupations. Despite this, there was a coal strike at Wollondilly Colliery in February 1943. By the end of the war, most coal from these mines was leaving the district by truck, which meant that the Camden tramway, despite moving large quantities of coal, had a limited life in the post-war era.

¹²⁶

Camden Advertiser 8 October 1942.

Shortages of materials, labour and housing continued well 'beyond the war years'. Frank Stuckey, a local baker, recalled that there was stiff competition for skilled labour in the immediate post-war years and for his firm to attract a baker and pastry cook to Camden, they had to 'buy a cottage, and to rent another' to house them.¹²⁷ Under the government's post-war decentralisation programme two small factories were established in Camden, the Dyomee Brassiere Company, which set up in the agricultural hall, and the Fostars Shoes Pty Ltd, which opened in the Forrester's Hall. Both operations provided new opportunities for young single women in Camden. These operations led to complaints from some that there was 'no domestic help' available 'for homes' and that the halls were needed for community use. An application for a tannery to commence operations was rejected.

At the end of the war forty-six men had been killed in action (including one Macarthur Onslow) and seven were decorated (including two Macarthur Onslows). It is hard to ascertain the total number of men and women who went away to war from Camden, but from what is available 448 men's names and seventeen women were listed on the 'Honor Roll' that was published in the *Camden News* in conjunction with the 'Welcome Home Dinner' in 1946.¹²⁸ From my research these figures are understated by about 20-25 per cent, so the real figure would be closer to 600 for those who served from the Camden district.

One issue that ran parallel to the war and was to have a profound effect on the western part of the district in the post-war era, was the construction of Warragamba Dam. The record drought from 1934-42 'almost caused a total failure of Sydney's water supply system', and led to the construction of a weir on the Warragamba River in 1937. In 1941 the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board 'adopted a resolution making the Warragamba Dam the most urgent of its construction works'. The decision did not meet with local approval and led to the formation of the Burragorang Valley Defence League in 1941. The League held protest meetings and maintained that 175 local families were affected, rich farmland would be lost, and there would be the loss of local tourism, especially for the guest houses in the Valley. The whole scheme was projected to cost £23 million, construction work

¹²⁷ Stuckey, *Our Daily Bread*, p. 27.

¹²⁸ *Camden News* 12 September 1946.

began in 1946, and was completed in 1960.¹²⁹ The project caused immense social dislocation.¹³⁰

This brief overview has highlighted some of the short term changes brought by the war: the loss of men, the economic benefits, the construction of infrastructure, the presence of military personnel and their relationship with the community and the creation of new organisations. Long term changes, such as subtle shifts in Camden's social order, and the psychological effect on the families of returning POWs and those who were permanently maimed, are harder to pin point. No research has been conducted on these issues in Camden, although they have been partly addressed elsewhere.¹³¹

Conclusion

Camden's class structure was built around rural ideology and was based on economic factors, historical factors, location and education. Its origins were located in Camden's colonial past, and its basic structure proved to be amazingly resilient over time. Within class groupings used for the thesis, alliances were formed that were related to kinship, personal relationships, religion and the various voluntary associations that people joined in the district.

Camden's class structure was the backbone of its social infrastructure and guided all social interactions in the town and district including relationships within voluntary organisations, the nature of volunteering and philanthropy. The most important alliances formed within class groupings were those created by the elite because they determined who effectively controlled volunteering and philanthropy.

The female elite used their status and social authority to control female volunteering and philanthropy in the pre-war years. Their service ideology was a natural part of their class identity, and as the thesis will show, was not only derived from Camden Victorianism, but was also subject to social forces associated with appearance of the

¹²⁹

Camden Advertiser 13 February 1941, 10 April 1941, 17 April 1941, 15 May 1941; *Camden News* 13 February 1941; Beasley, *The Sweat of Their Brows*, pp.42-45, 52-54.

¹³⁰

Read, *Returning to Nothing*, pp. 18-19, 22.

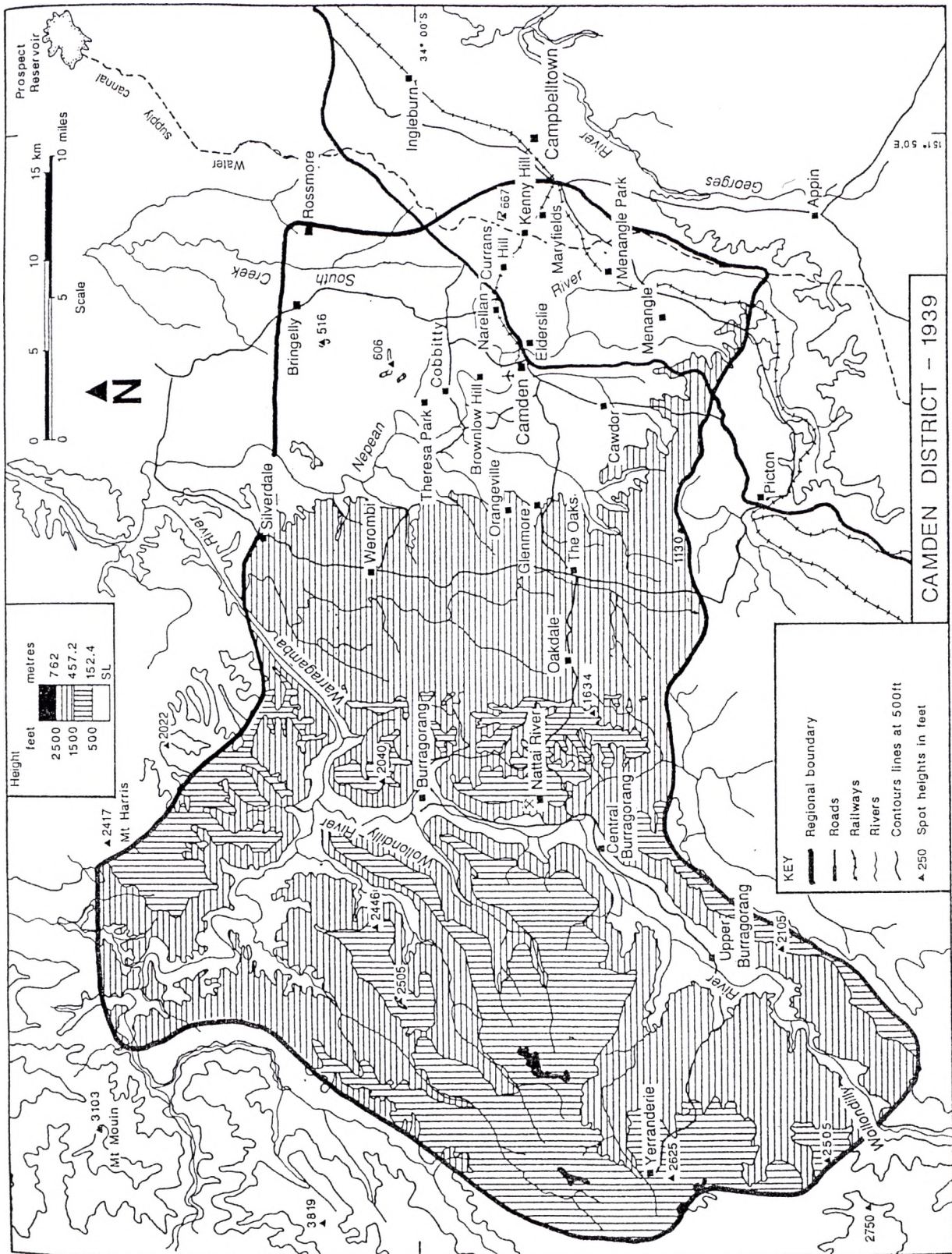
¹³¹

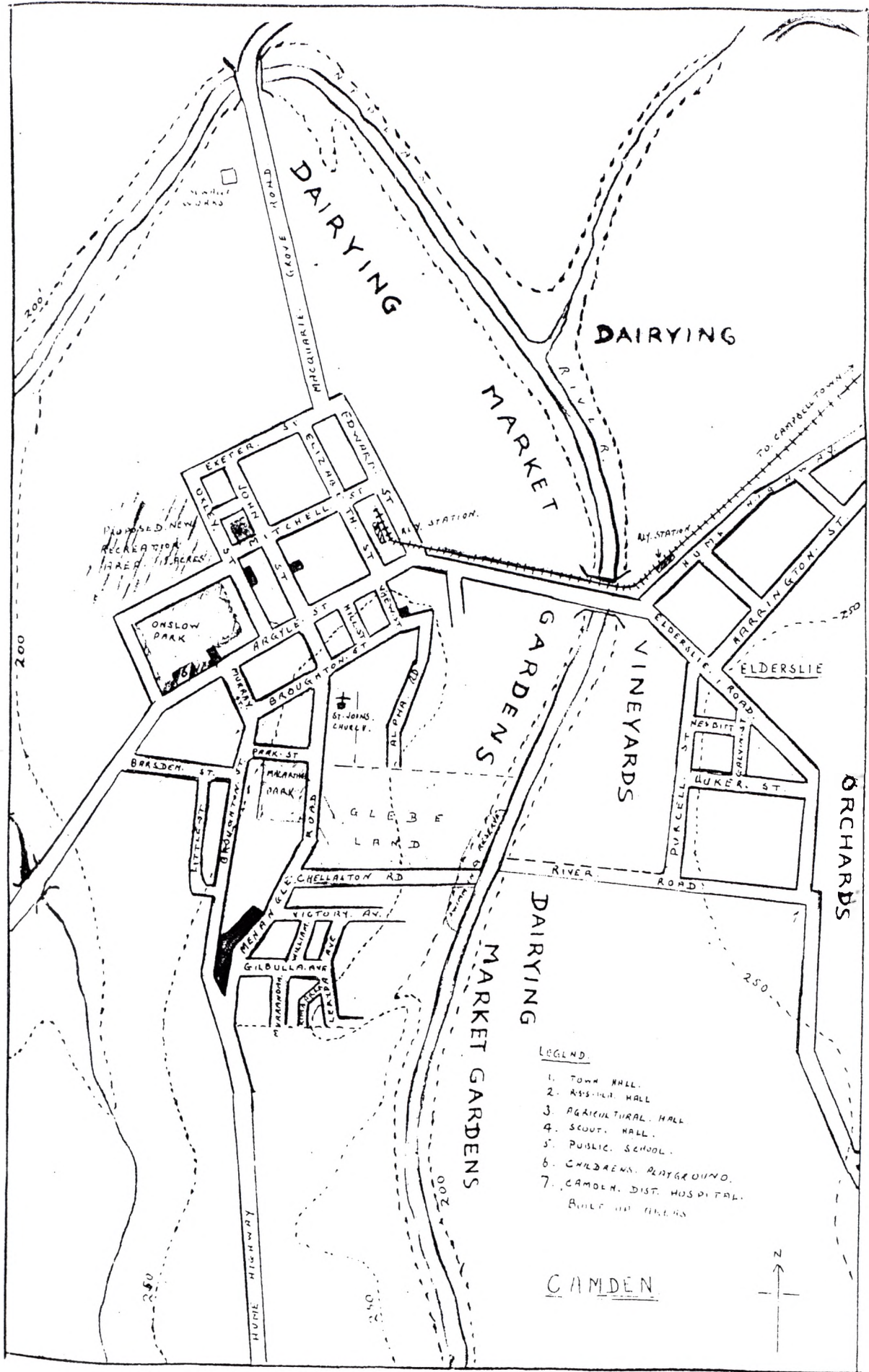
Garton, *The Cost of War*, Damousi, *The Labour of Loss* and *Living with the Aftermath*.

'modern woman'. The service ideology adopted by these women was sufficiently robust and flexible to be able to adjust to different aspects of Camden's rural ideology, and found its way into many aspects of the life of wartime Camden.

Conservatism was an important element in the region's social character and was part of Camden's rural ideology. It not only maintained a *status quo* of values and attitudes but also helped define who was, and who was not, a 'local'. The suspicion of 'outsiders', especially 'city types', was a natural part of that conservatism. They could be seen as a threat to the area's social cohesion, and yet on other occasions the community could embrace them. In addition, there was evidence of sub-regional identities within the Camden district, and the construction of these local identities contributed to petty rivalries and provincialism that were all part of parochialism and localness.

This was the social and cultural environment in which the WVS was established and conducted its activities during the war. It provides the overall context for the remainder of the thesis.





Camden (1948)



Argyle St, Camden. c.1938.

Source: Scan Studios, Camden Historical Society Collection.



Lady Stella Reading

Source: Graves, *Women in Green*, p. ii.



Sibella Macarthur Onslow

(Photo taken in library at Camden Park c.1922)

Source: Tildesley, *A History of the Queen's Club*, p. 22..



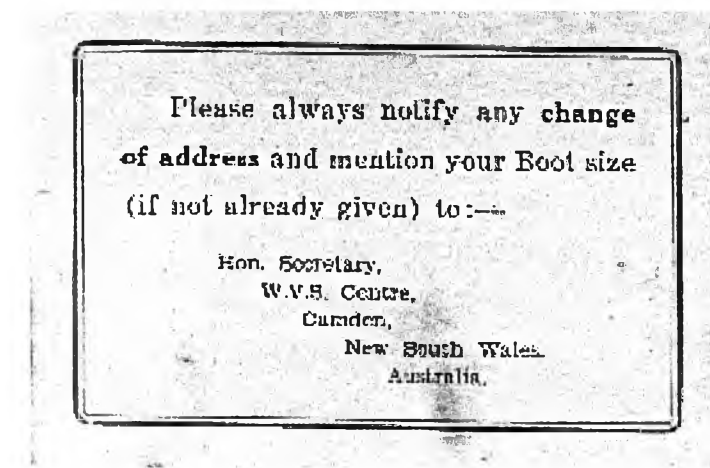
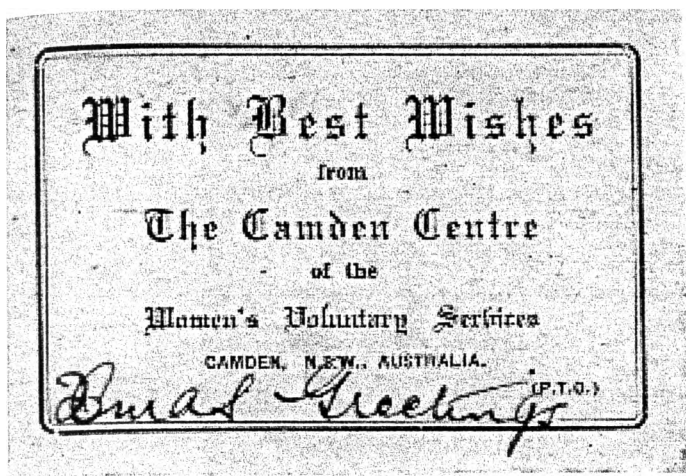
George Victor Sidman.

Source: Sidman, *The Town of Camden*, p. 4.



Rita Tucker (Second from left) c.1950. Other individuals in photo are her husband, Rupert Tucker (Third from left) and, daughter, Joanna Tucker (first on right) and her husband.

Source: John Tucker.



Front and obverse of card sent by Camden WVS to R Smith, AC1, of Camden with 1942 Christmas Hamper.

Card completed by EHG (Grace) Moore, Camden WVS Secretary.

Source: CS, 2002.



Wedding Day for Patricia Fraser and Flying Officer Robert Hider, August 1944.

Source: Colman, *Just A Simple Wish* , p. 32.

CHAPTER THREE

‘OUR BRITISH HERITAGE’

WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND NEW SOUTH WALES

The Camden WVS was part of the international WVS movement¹ which originated in the United Kingdom in 1938 and shortly afterwards founds its way to New South Wales. The purpose of the chapter is to examine the factors that influenced the service ethos of the British WVS and to show how these values were mirrored by the Australian-British female elite, including those in Camden.

Central to its argument is an examination of the founder of the British WVS, Stella Reading. Her leadership of the WVS drew on the service ideology associated with Victorian female philanthropy, and was also influenced by her middle class upbringing, her experience of paid work and eventually her position as a member of the British elite. Both Reading's interpretation of the volunteering ethos and the organisational structure of the British WVS would be mirrored in the foundation of the WVS in New South Wales and, of course, Camden.

Stella Reading and the WVS.

The origins of the WVS stemmed from the European instability of the 1920s and 1930s following the First World War. Consequently, Britain developed a number of civil defence plans, one of which concerned Air Raid Precautions (ARP) and the enrolment of women in ARP services.

1. The influence of the British WVS during the war spread to other countries including the United States of America, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, India and a host of other British colonies. Graves, *Women in Green*, pp. 270-276.

In 1923 the Committee of Imperial Defence established an ARP sub-committee, and in 1929 the British Cabinet decided to create a secretariat for the ARP. In 1935 the Home Office established a department of the ARP, which developed a scheme which was organised by local government, and which would train and use volunteers. An Air Raid Wardens Service was established in 1937, and a Ministry of Home Security was established. In early 1938 an ARP Bill was passed by the British Government, which required larger local authorities to develop ARP schemes and submit them to the Government.²

In March 1938, the Home Secretary broadcast an appeal for one million ARP volunteers to act as wardens, and to provide other services, which included first aid parties, a report service, store keepers, messengers and clerks. There was an immediate response, with more women volunteering than men. The Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, later wrote that the idea 'emerged of starting a new women's organisation sufficiently flexible to cope with unimagined difficulties likely to arise in Civil Defence'.³

Hoare went to see Stella Reading, the chairman of the Personal Service League, to put together a proposal for a new women's organisation for ARP. From this 'emerged a philosophy and pattern of voluntary service remarkable even for Britain'.⁴ Thus the WVS was born with Stella Reading as founding chairman, and eventually it became one of the most important organisations on the British homefront. Oppenheimer argues that in this respect the British Government 'was particularly adept at recognising the value and worth of women's volunteer work'.⁵

Reading was a conservative female philanthropist in the Victorian tradition and completely dominated the WVS. The WVS became a personification of her values and she created an organisation that reflected her interpretation of voluntary service. The influence for this interpretation came from a number of sources including the

² Marwick, *The Home Front*, p. 14; Bentley Beaman, *Green Sleeves*, p. 6; Longmate, *How We Lived Then*, p. 1; Calder, *The People's War*, p. 22.

³ Bentley Beaman, *Green Sleeves*, p. 6.

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 105.

traditions surrounding Victorian female philanthropy, 'work done by women during the Spanish Civil War'⁶ and the life experiences of Reading herself.

Reading was born into a middle class family who were part of the expatriate British community in Constantinople. As a young girl her mother, who was a 'devout evangelical Christian', schooled her at home in the Victorian tradition of femininity and the 'ideals of service'.⁷ Her upbringing instilled in her the middle class values of thrift, obedience, loyalty, courtesy and honour. Her mother had the help of servants in a 'large rambling country house', which was run on 'austere lines', but was always open to visitors.⁸ Philanthropy was practised in the household by her mother who would 'take food to local Greeks who had fallen on hard times'. Volunteering was one of the few acceptable 'public personas' for middle class women.⁹ Reading's lifestyle was not particularly onerous with visitors being 'invited to go sailing, [play] tennis' or go 'sightseeing'.¹⁰

Reading was brought up in an era when women were expected to serve and 'femininity was socially defined in terms of dependency, self-sacrifice and service'.¹¹ To be truly feminine women were required to have a capacity for 'self-effacement', 'self-denial', 'modesty', and to be 'always charming, always sympathetic, conciliatory, [and] sacrificing herself daily to others'.¹² Reading was exposed to the Victorian 'ideals of service [central] to the constructions of femininity and girlhood'.¹³ She copied her mother, who provided 'an environment... in which *men* could live and work', while being a 'true' model of 'feminine behaviour and refinement'.¹⁴

The outbreak of war in 1914 found her family back in Britain 'badly off', and she subsequently trained, and found work, as a secretary.¹⁵ Her paid work provided her with economic independence and gave her an understanding of the liberating

6. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 10.

7. 'Mrs WS Edmonds,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 3-4.

8. *ibid.*

9. Judith Godden, 'Portrait of a lady: A decade in the life of Helen Fell (1849-1935)' in Bevege, James, & Shute, *Worth Her Salt*, p. 40.

10. 'Mrs WS Edmonds,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 4.

11. Tinkler, 'At Your Service', p. 353.

12. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp. 34-38, 78.

13. Tinkler, 'At Your Service', p. 353.

14. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp. 12, 26.

15. 'Mrs WS Edmonds,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 3-4.

experience that this provided for women. During the Edwardian phase of Reading's life she was exposed to modernity. In the mid 1920s she tried to set up her own business with a female friend, but it came to nothing.¹⁶

Reading took secretarial work with a firm of solicitors, became personal secretary to a newly created Peer, and in 1925 she was offered a job in India as secretary to the first Lady Reading.¹⁷ Stella later returned to Britain with the family in 1926,¹⁸ and on the death of Lady Reading in 1931, Stella married Rufus Isaacs, the First Marquess of Reading (1860-1935).¹⁹ Reading's upward social mobility changed her life, and on Isaac's death in 1935, she became a wealthy woman with the means and free time to undertake 'good works' for the community.²⁰ Her actions in this respect were strongly influenced by the philanthropic principles of her adopted class. Under the idea of *noblesse oblige*, the elite undertook volunteering as part of their class culture, based on the acceptance of duty, social obligations, and the notion of Christian charity.

Reading used her membership of the elite, her femininity and sexuality to cultivate male support from those in senior positions in the British Government. These men acted as mentors and later supported her interests in the WVS. One such man was Lord Zuckerman, who was 'devoted to her'.²¹ According to her social peers she was always 'fussy about her hair', had a 'splendid dress sense', wore 'lipstick and nail varnish', and 'had many female attributes to a high degree of excellence'.²² Charles Cunningham, Secretary of the Scottish Home Department and later Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Home Office, claimed that Reading struck him 'as

¹⁶ 'Mrs Ralph Edwards', in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 6.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Simon, 'Rufus Daniel Isaacs', in Wickham Legg, *The Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940*, p. 466.

¹⁹ Stella Reading became the second wife of Rufus Daniel Isaacs, 1st Marquess of Reading (1860-1935) in 1931. He was a British lawyer and administrator, member of Asquith government (1910-1913), solicitor-general (1910) and attorney general (1910-1913), Lord Chief Justice (1913), ambassador to Washington (1918-1921), viceroy of India (1921-26), marquess (1926), chairman of ICI (1928-31, 1931-35), foreign secretary in Ramsay MacDonald's coalition (1931) and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports (1934-35). Jones & Dixon, *The MacMillan Dictionary of Biography*, p. 703.

²⁰ Even as early as 1925 Reading's interest in community service prompted her and 'a number of her old friends' to start the Personal Service League. 'Mrs Ralph Edwards,' 'Mrs Sullivan,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 6, 8. Between 1932 and 1969 she was an executive member of 21 voluntary associations, a member of 10 advisory committees and working parties of the British Government, received nine medals and decorations and nine honorary degrees. Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 36-37.

²¹ 'Lord Zuckerman, OM, KCB, FRS', in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 32.

²² 'Mrs Sullivan', 'Lady Hamilton', 'Mrs Antony Thesiger' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 8, 26, 20.

deeply feminine in mind and attitude. She had a deep and very feminine understanding of the suffering of other people and of how best to meet their needs. She had a woman's creative gifts... and on occasions could show a woman's prejudice'.²³ Lord Allen and Lord Zuckerman found that she had an 'innate modesty', and felt that she gave 'unsparingly of herself and her affection to those around her'.²⁴ It was claimed that she had a 'capacity to listen', and 'personal humility', which 'appeared in the most unexpected and disarming ways'.²⁵

Reading's interpretation of voluntary service was a natural response to the variety of life experiences that had shaped her view of the world. She saw volunteering as 'the gift of a thinking person of his skill, energy, time, given with understanding so as to achieve a certain purpose'. Volunteering took its inspiration from Christian charity, and was a self-imposed 'duty' so that one could come to an 'understanding and human realisation of the needs of others'. 'Real voluntary service', according to Reading, involved a spiritual idealism that was only acquired through action, and was an acceptance of the 'burden' and 'responsibility' that went with 'duty'.²⁶ Reading felt that her main objective within the WVS was 'to instil a sense of selfless service' in all volunteers, which she felt at the time, was 'the most practical' form of 'patriotism'.²⁷

For Reading in 1938 the

WVS started as an idea. But [soon] became an ideal - an ideal of organised voluntary service given to those who really need it; a service that tried and tries to bring domestic happiness on a national scale, avoiding patronage, sentimentally [sic] and self-glory. Its success... [showed] that it... endowed its volunteers... with a pride in achievement... [and] a deep recognition of the privilege of service.²⁸

^{23.} Cunningham was the Secretary, Scottish Home Department, 1948-57, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, 1957-66. 'Sir Charles Cunningham, GCB, KBE, CVO', in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 29.

^{24.} Lord Allen was Permanent Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, 1966-72, and Chairman of the National Council of Social Service, 1973-77. 'Lord Allen of Abbeydale, CBE,' 'Lord Zuckerman, OM, KCB, FRS,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 30, 34.

^{25.} 'Lady Casey' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 31.

^{26.} Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, p. iii.

^{27.} Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 15.

^{28.} *ibid.*

Reading led by example and her commitment to voluntary service within the WVS was total, and was consistent with the ideology of *noblesse oblige*. According to those who knew her 'service was her life' and she was 'devoted to the service of her country'.²⁹ Reading 'believed in the blessings of voluntary work, [and] in the job being more important than the person doing it'.³⁰ Many felt that she 'devoted her life to helping others',³¹ where volunteering demanded 'kindness', 'compassion', and 'understanding'.³²

During the war Reading felt that it was her mission to be dutiful and patriotic by serving her country. Her altruism was never questioned.³³ She maintained at the end of the war that:

to me has fallen the privilege of being in charge of the first years of the WVS. No woman could have been more fortunate, no woman could have had a greater opportunity. During the years of war, I have grown to know that there is no more wonderful experience in the world than working with and for British women... I am a very much humbler woman at the end of these years' service and wish I were sufficiently master of my pen to thank all my colleagues who have given me the opportunity to glimpse something of the sublime.³⁴

Her speeches reflect the obligations and responsibilities, which, she felt, were part of her social rank. They were littered with references to 'privilege of service', 'self-sacrifice', 'selfless work', 'strength' and 'courage'.³⁵

Like the suffragettes, Reading supported the Victorian construction of femininity, that is, a woman's virtues of purity, sobriety and maternal instinct, which were soon to be needed in the world at large. To her the family represented stability and

²⁹ 'Lord Zuckerman, OM, KCB, FRS,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 34.

³⁰ 'Mrs Antony Thesiger,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 20.

³¹ 'Tribute on her death from six former Home Secretaries,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 35.

³² Fenno, *It's The Job That Counts*, p. 39.

³³ Windlesham, 'Stella Isaacs', in Blake & Nicholls, *The Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980*, p. 446.

³⁴ Graves, *Women in Green*, p. vii.

³⁵ Fenno, *It's The Job That Counts*.

security³⁶ and women should take a secondary role to men during the war. She stated,

Women must bring normality back to men and stand behind them in this awful nightmare. Women must give men the background they need to win through.³⁷

Reading was described by a friend, Virginia Graham, as 'a feminist... in the old fashioned sense' and insisted that Reading felt that 'a wife's priority was her husband'. Graham maintained that Reading was 'no advocate of women leaving their menfolk night after night to work in factories or canteens'. She expressed to Graham her belief that although women 'were far more practical than men... men had more vision'.³⁸ Reading found support for the sanctity of the family and marriage in her evangelical religious beliefs, where the 'spiritual and moral aspects of church life' were left to the women. In this context Reading's work was compatible with the Protestant churches and their missionary work. These missionary activities acquired 'feminine' images, and emphasised 'the caring, loving, more benign and forgiving aspects' of God (and Christ).³⁹

Although having no children of her own,⁴⁰ Reading felt that motherhood was a national imperative and could be a legitimate expression of patriotism. According to her, motherhood needed to be protected otherwise the welfare of the nation was under threat, and women should volunteer for the WVS to protect 'the future of the race'.⁴¹ She stated that 'millions of women in Great Britain... are working to preserve the things we all love - family life'.⁴² Reading maintained,

We should never forget that the woman who works in her own home, looking after her husband and caring for her children... is guarding and building the greatest strength of the nation, that of the united family.⁴³

^{36.} Carol Bacchi, 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes towards Women, 1870-1920', in Windshuttle, *Women, Class and History*, p. 158.

^{37.} Fenno, *It's The Job That Counts*, p. 24.

^{38.} 'Mrs Antony Thesiger' in Pike, Stella Reading, p. 20.

^{39.} Beverley Kingston, 'Faith and Fetes, Women and History of the Churches in Australia', in Willis, *Women, Faith and Fetes*, p. 22.

^{40.} 'Lady Ballantrae,' in Pike, Stella Reading, p. 25.

^{41.} Rodwell, 'Professor Harvey Sutton', p. 165.

^{42.} Fenno, *It's The Job That Counts*, p. 8.

^{43.} Fenno, *It's The Job That Counts*, p. 104.

She equated the strength of the British family with the strength of the nation, and felt that 'no volunteer [should] be asked to put his job as a volunteer before family responsibility'.⁴⁴ She saw the family 'as the incubator of strong and healthy citizens'.⁴⁵ Her personal secretary maintained that 'during her marriage, she did very little outside work, she was too busy looking after Lord Reading, [and] his interests'.⁴⁶ Reading plainly expected the same from other women who volunteered for the WVS and consequently developed patriotic activities within the WVS for house-bound women.⁴⁷

Reading attempted to persuade British women that individual acts of volunteering for the WVS became collective acts of national patriotism. She stated:

I feel that any woman who does not give up her leisure will regret it so forcibly that she will feel ashamed for not doing so. Remember that what you are doing now is not for yourself. It is to help other people... It is to help the England we all love so much.⁴⁸

Reading maintained that those who volunteered did it 'primarily to serve the community, but in the hope that it might be of use to the nation, and possibly at some time of value to the world'. Here, there is a hint of universal humanitarianism, based on Christian traditions. She went on:

The glory of Britain has not been won or held by its leaders, it has been achieved and maintained by the mass of right-minded and ordinary people who have acted in the belief that the rights of others and fair play for all should come across ahead of their own personal wishes.⁴⁹

Reading felt that the strength of the British nation came from the joint action of individuals through voluntary service. The devastation of war brought an honourable

⁴⁴. Reading, *Voluntary Service*, p. 9.

⁴⁵. Carol Bacchi, 'Evolution, Eugenics and Women: The Impact of Scientific Theories on Attitudes towards Women, 1870-1920', in Windshuttle, *Women, Class and History*, p. 160.

⁴⁶. 'Mrs Sullivan,' in Pike, Stella Reading, p. 8.

⁴⁷. Most notably the Housewives Service, where women were provided with basic training and then expected to assist local wardens with a range of duties, such as keeping details of local residents and shelters, providing refreshments, child-minding and other domestic related activities.

⁴⁸. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 27.

⁴⁹. Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, p. iv.

suffering where people could maintain their dignity and do their duty appropriate to their social rank. She maintained,

we have suffered a great deal. We have to realize our sufferings are not at an end, we have to stop and build again... We have been privileged to live in the most dreadful of all times. As a nation we have to stand proud and straight and with as much power as before, each individual playing his or her part, so that the character of the individual becomes the character of the nation.⁵⁰

According to the British elite each citizen was under a direct obligation to the British state, which meant that individuals were obliged to fulfil their civic responsibilities. Graves maintained that:

In the case of the WVS it was a great surge of effort by women to show how deeply they recognised and appreciated the privilege of being British citizens, and, therefore, undertook - each to the best of her individual ability, and in her own particular way - to pay her share of the debt which she felt she owed to the community.⁵¹

The WVS provided many opportunities for the woman to express her desires for independence through wartime voluntary service. Reading maintained that she could arouse

a sense of personal responsibility [amongst] women who had never dreamed that they could influence the life of the whole nation.⁵²

In fact, 'few women volunteered to do what they knew. Most of them wanted a change',⁵³ even if it only meant a different form of domesticity. Reading believed that the roles that the WVS promoted for women allowed them to gain new experiences, some of which were normally restricted to men. She encouraged women to resist their timidity. She felt that

⁵⁰. Fenno, *It's The Job That Counts*, p. 105.

⁵¹. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 141.

⁵². Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 24-25.

⁵³. *ibid.*

women suffered from an inferiority complex... They suffered from a complex of trying to do things better than anyone else and until they were sure they could do it properly, they did not want to take over a job.⁵⁴

Reading maintained that the 'greatest disservice a women [could] do [was] to consider herself useless'. She believed that women could perform as well as the men in civil defence duties,⁵⁵ and began holding first aid and gas defence classes in her home as early as February 1938.⁵⁶

Reading's personal view of the world guided the aims and operation of the organisation. She made a natural leader with her charisma, 'vitality', 'drive' and steely determination,⁵⁷ and was constantly referred to as the 'Chairman'.⁵⁸ She was direct and strong-willed⁵⁹ and her presence and 'deep voice' charmed many,⁶⁰ and frightened others, including those in the Ministries.⁶¹ Reading retained 'absolute power and authority in her own hands',⁶² and completely dominated the WVS until her death in 1971.

The organisational structure of the WVS indicated that Reading was not a natural member of the British elite, and that apart from her middle class origins, she was influenced by modernity and the desire for independence by women. Consequently, unlike the hierarchical structure of other British philanthropic organisations, under her influence the WVS 'was organised on original lines'.⁶³ There were no ranks, discipline was a personal matter, and quite importantly, there was no fundraising. Reading found the charity committee system cumbersome and frustrating, and had a strong dislike of bureaucracy and fundraising.⁶⁴ In the WVS she remedied this situation by having a minimum of paid staff and committees, and only having a

⁵⁴. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 28.

⁵⁵. 'Mrs Sullivan,' 'Mrs Anthony Thesiger,' and 'Lady Ballantrae,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 7-8, 20, 25.

⁵⁶. Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 2.

⁵⁷. 'Dame Mary Smieton,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 13.

⁵⁸. *ibid.*

⁵⁹. 'Sir Charles Cunningham, GCB, KBE, CVO,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 29.

⁶⁰. 'Lord Zuckerman,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, p. 32.

⁶¹. 'Sir Charles Cunningham,' 'Lady Hamilton,' 'Mrs James De Rothschild,' in Pike, *Stella Reading*, pp. 29, 26, 11.

⁶². Windlesham, 'Stella Isaacs', in Blake and Nicholls, *The Dictionary of National Biography 1971-1980*, p. 445.

⁶³. *ibid.*

⁶⁴. *ibid.*

small executive committee.⁶⁵ This also allowed her to keep a tight control on the administration and activities of the Service. The Home Office gave her a small office and met WVS head office expenses.⁶⁶

Under Reading's leadership members of the British female elite were appointed to the Service. Its leadership and administration was completely female, unlike other voluntary organisations, which had male administrative committees and middle class female volunteers. Reading's patronage resulted in the appointment of many female friends and colleagues to senior positions within the WVS.⁶⁷ The WVS also co-ordinated co-operation between different women's organisations, often for the first time. For instance, early in the war Reading established an Advisory Council for the WVS, which was made up of forty-nine women's organisations, which were a mixture of the major British women's professional, political, humanitarian and religious organisations.⁶⁸ Apart from encouraging inter-organisational co-operation this process was also an attempt to suppress rivalry between women's organisations. Co-operation of this nature was also facilitated by extensive overlapping membership between a number of women's organisations by WVS volunteers. These women were of similar social status and rank, and sometimes held executive positions in more than one of these organisations.⁶⁹

Reading established a vast decentralised network of WVS centres across Great Britain. In all there were 1,750 active centres during the war, with a membership of over one million women.⁷⁰ Women who volunteered covered a range of ages depending on the activity, but 'married women...predominated'. 'Single leisured women between the ages of 25-35 [apparently] did not take kindly to any branch of Civil Defence work'.⁷¹ The range of voluntary activities that the WVS undertook

⁶⁵. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 2.

⁶⁶. Bentley Beaman, *Green Sleeves*, p. 8; Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, p. 2.

⁶⁷. See Bentley Beaman, *Green Sleeves*, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁸. For instance The College of Nursing, the Association of Headmistresses and British Federation of University Women, the British Red Cross Society, the Personal Service League, the Conservative Central Women's Advisory Committee, the National Council of Equal Citizenship, the Women's Liberal Federation, the National Free Church Women's Council, the Church of England Women's Interest, the Women's Farm and Garden Association and the Federation of Soroptimist Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland. Mitchell Library [ML], WVS, MSS 408 Box 1(3), Papers from Women's Voluntary Service for ARP; Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 2.

⁶⁹. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 252.

⁷⁰. Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, pp. 2-3.

⁷¹. Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 22.

during the war increased as circumstances demanded, and by the end of the war the WVS had organised 131 separate types of activities for seventeen different government departments. The range of activities included the provision of civil defence personnel, welfare services, recreational facilities, as well as hospitality, information and educational services and a host of others. All these activities reflected the enormity of the voluntary effort undertaken by the WVS.⁷² Volunteers showed their courage, patriotism and tenacity through active service, sometimes in atrocious conditions, and some with the loss of their lives.⁷³

Reading designed an organisation that maximised the opportunity for participation by women within the existing social norms. For Reading volunteering for the British WVS involved self-sacrifice and dedication to duty, which was part of an ideology of service that was drawn from the traditions of British Victorian philanthropy. Wartime volunteering was an act of patriotic nationalism in the defence of the country, as much as it was an act of altruism. Reading understood the desires and aspirations of women, and like other successful British women in female philanthropy she exercised power from within.⁷⁴ At the same time she developed a 'public persona' for herself that allowed her to move between the private and public spheres. Reading did not challenge patriarchy or male hegemony in either British society or the British government and created a 'parallel power structure' for herself within the British bureaucracy. Consequently, she exercised considerable social and political authority, and her influence spread throughout the British Empire and to other parts of the world.⁷⁵

The New South Wales Women's Voluntary Services

The New South Wales female elite, who possessed similar values and attitudes to Stella Reading, were influenced by her work, her devotion to the ideology of

⁷² Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, pp. 83-86.

⁷³ During the war 241 WVS female volunteers were killed on active service in Britain. Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, p. 5.

⁷⁴ Women such as Lady Denman, Chairman of the National Federation of Women Institutes, 1911-1943. McCall, *Women's Institutes*, pp. 8-10.

⁷⁵ The American and Canadian WVSs were established in 1941. The WVS was also established in New Zealand, South Africa, India, Nigeria, Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Trinidad and others. Centres started in British embassies in Athens, Syria, Baghdad, Tehran, Bogota, Lisbon, Madeira and others. By 1963 the WVS was, or had, operated in 40 separate countries. Graves, *Women in Green*, pp. 271-276; Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, pp. 92-93.

voluntary service, the activities she organised for the British WVS and its organisational character. These were the same women that Shute maintains tried to 'forestall a recurrence' of the rejection of their patriotic services experienced during the First World War. As a consequence they began to organise 'paramilitary organisations'. These women wanted to take 'an active part in the war effort'. They were 'better educated than in previous generations', had smaller families but still found career opportunities 'extremely restricted'⁷⁶. They exercised their independence and choice by keeping themselves informed of events in Great Britain through their social contacts, and reports of the British WVS in the women's pages of the Sydney press⁷⁷ and 'wanted to actively participate in some way'.⁷⁸

These were the same women who attended the biennial conference of the National Council of Women of New South Wales in 1940, and were influenced by the Munich crisis of September 1938, to compile a women's register 'for national service' to meet 'any emergency'.⁷⁹ The Council approached the National Council of Women of Great Britain for advice on an appropriate organisation, and in conjunction with the New South Wales CWA, decided to form an organisation modelled 'closely on [the] WVS in Great Britain'.⁸⁰ While acknowledging a 'difference in conditions',⁸¹ the National Council of Women and CWA tried to adopt 'the spirit' of the British WVS, as well as adopting the same name and 'machinery'.⁸² Subsequently, on 9 January 1939 the National Council of Women and CWA organised a public meeting to establish the WVS in New South Wales.⁸³ Those elected to the founding committee were president, Ruby Board, secretaries, Marie L Farquharson and Janet Merewether, and treasurer, H Taylor.⁸⁴ Other women appointed to the executive included Miss Parry, FJ Davy, Ada Beveridge, EP Evans and E Smith.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Shute, Carmel, 'From Balaclavas to Bayonets, Women's Voluntary War Work, 1939-1941', in Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*, pp. 364-365.

⁷⁷ For instance, Betty Wilson, 'Half a Million Women To Serve England, Preparing For National Emergency', *Women's Supplement, Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 July 1938.

⁷⁸ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 115.

⁷⁹ Archives Authority of New South Wales [AANSW], Kingswood, National Emergency Services Correspondence Files [NESCFC], 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS Annual Report [WVS AR], Marie Farquharson, 14 February 1940.

⁸⁰ ML, WVS, MSS 408 2(3), Eighth AR, Mrs Tildesley, 10 April 1947.

⁸¹ ML, WVS, MSS 408 2(3), 2nd AR, Mrs Beatrice Tildesley, 14 February 1941.

⁸² AANSW, NESCFC, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR, Marie Farquharson, 14 February 1940. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1939

⁸⁴ AANSW, NESCFC, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, WVS 1940 AR; 40/80B/1180, 10/42308, 1938-40

⁸⁵ Biennial Reports of the National Council of Women of New South Wales [BR NCW].

Some of these women also had a number of other affiliations. For example, Ruby Board (president, National Council of Women of New South Wales), Marie L. Farquharson (secretary, National Council of Women of New South Wales), F.J. Davy, MBE (delegate for New South Wales

There is little written material to indicate the philosophical outlook of the founders of the WVS movement in New South Wales. The WVS did not produce a journal of any kind, and there are no recorded speeches of these women, unlike those of Reading. The attitude of the founding women to the 'notions of service' can only be gleaned from their actions, the direction they encouraged the WVS to take during the war and searching the records of organisations other than those of the WVS. At this point it is useful to examine, from the information that is available, the personal profiles of the founders of the WVS. This provides a useful examination of the socialisation process of these women and their subsequent volunteering for the WVS. As contemporaries of Reading there were many similarities between them.

Ruby Board (1880-1963) was a leading figure in Sydney wartime voluntarism and a member of a prominent New South Wales family with a strong evangelical background. Her mother, Jessie, a daughter of a Methodist minister, provided her only daughter with a Victorian education. Board was schooled in the feminine service role by her mother in a 'small and closely linked family'. Her father, Peter, was Director of Education in New South Wales, and as a result she had 'no financial need to work' and 'was free' to pursue her personal interests. She travelled with her family to Great Britain, the United States of America, Germany and France, and attended school in Paris and Berlin.⁸⁶

Board exhibited the typical traits of Victorian femininity, particularly those related to service. She 'nursed her mother until her death in 1932', and, according to one commentator, had a 'life long service to the community'. She was 'selfless and generous', self-effacing and was 'not interested in power for its own sake, or in office for its prestige, and always sought to provide opportunities for the individual's expansion'.⁸⁷

Women's Hockey Association to the ex-committee of National Council of Women of New South Wales; member of the New South Wales Amateur Sports Council), Ada Beveridge (vice-president, National Council of Women of New South Wales; president, New South Wales CWA, 1938-41), E.P. Evans (delegate for Australian Trained Nurses' Association to the Executive Committee of National Council of Women of New South Wales). ML, WVS, MSS 408 1(3), Executive Minutes [EM], WVS, 19 January 1939.

⁸⁶ Andre Wright, 'Ruby Board', in Nairn and Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 7*, pp. 330-331; J.F. Arnot, Ruby Board; Gilbert Whitley, 'Peter Board', in Chisholm, *Australian Encyclopaedia, Volume 2*, p. 43.

⁸⁷ Andre Wright, 'Ruby Board', in Nairn and Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 7*,

A Presbyterian, she took a strong interest in philanthropy, and having never married, she had a large amount of personal freedom after her mother's death. She was the general secretary of the National Council of Women (1914-1918) and president (1938-1948), led the Australian delegation to the International Council of Women Conference in Washington in 1925, was president of the Blue Mountains CWA (1930-1938), vice-president of the Board of the Rachel Forster Hospital (1939-59), founding president of the Women's Voluntary National Register (1940), defence director of the Women's Auxiliary National Service, a member of the Australian Comforts Fund and founding president of Housekeeper's Emergency Service (1943), and later, president of the Diabetic Association of New South Wales. She received a Companion of (the Order of) St Michael & St George (CMG) in 1931 for community service.⁸⁸ Board adopted similar recruiting practices to Reading, and travelled throughout country New South Wales helping to establish new WVS centres.

Ada Beveridge (1875-1964) was born in rural Queensland, and received a Victorian education at Sydney Girls' High School in the late 1880s and then completed a BA at the University of Sydney in 1896. She experienced paid work as a schoolteacher after her graduation, and subsequently married into the New South Wales landed gentry, and lived on a large rural property in the Riverina.⁸⁹

Beveridge was a mother of two sons, and worked to improve the welfare of women in rural areas as a member of the New South Wales CWA, which has a strong ideology of service. She founded the Junee branch of the CWA (1926) and was the president of the New South Wales CWA (1938-1941) and vice-president of the National Council of Women of New South Wales (1938-42). She was international vice-president of the Pan-Pacific Women's Association (1937-1940) attending conferences in the United States of America and Canada, and an executive-member of the New South Wales Bush Nursing Association (1938-1949).⁹⁰ Beveridge's wartime service extended to being the executive chairman and Land Army director

^{88.} 1891-1939 pp. 330-331; J.F. Arnot, 'Ruby Board', Typescript, Mitchell Library, Sydney, 1966.
^{89.} *ibid.*

^{89.} Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 64; Julie Gorrell, 'Ada Beveridge', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 13*, p. 177.

^{90.} Julie Gorrell, 'Ada Beveridge', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 13*, p. 177.

of the Women's Australian National Services (1941)⁹¹ and founding executive member of the Women's War Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund (1939).⁹² She was awarded a Member (of the Order) of the British Empire (MBE) in 1941 for community service.⁹³ She unsuccessfully stood as an independent candidate for the Senate (1943) and belonged to the exclusive Lyceum, Women's and the Queen's Clubs, as well as the Royal Empire Society.⁹⁴

Marie Farquharson, (1883-1954) was the daughter of Robert, a schoolteacher, and his wife Sarah who bore eight children. Her mother, who ran a 'large household with regularity, care and exactness' gave her daughter a strong education in the service role of women. Her sister maintained that their mother's 'orderly approach to her responsibilities encouraged her daughters to develop an ability to organise efficiently their time and resources'.⁹⁵

In the late 1890s Farquharson received a Victorian girl's education at West Maitland Girls' High School, and after training as a schoolteacher undertook paid work. She was influenced by modernity and always took 'pride in her appearance and dressed smartly in well-cut clothes'. By marrying John, an accountant, in Lismore, she cemented her place in the rural upper-middle class, and subsequently had two children. While living in Sydney in 1923 she was the city correspondent 'for a group of country newspapers'.⁹⁶

As a Methodist, her Non-conformist upbringing instilled in her a strong tradition of philanthropy. In the upsurge of female voluntarism that emanated from Great Britain in 1914 she was founding secretary of the Lismore branch of the British Red Cross Society (1914-1923). She held various positions on the National Council of Women of New South Wales including State secretary (1926-32, 1940-1941, 1953-1954), executive member of the Australian Comforts Fund, supervisor of the Women's War Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund (1945), and president

⁹¹ AANSW, NESCF, 41/93/402, 10/42319, Women's Australian National Services, February 1941.

⁹² Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, p. 34.

⁹³ Julie Gorrell, 'Ada Beveridge', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 13, p. 177.

⁹⁴ Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 64; Julie Gorrell, 'Ada Beveridge', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 13, p. 177.

⁹⁵ Lyn Brignell, 'Marie Langley Farquharson', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 14, pp. 141-2.

⁹⁶ *idid*.

of the Women's Voluntary Service (1940-1942) and later founder and deputy-president of the Far West Children's Health Scheme.⁹⁷

Board, Beveridge and Farquharson, were intelligent, well educated women who had been socialised in the service role of women. They had been schooled in Victorian attitudes to femininity, and the 'ideals of dependency' and service associated with the 'separatedness' of spheres and evangelical Christianity. These women considered themselves to be independent British-Australians⁹⁸ and were strongly influenced by all things British, particularly those of English origin. They were independently minded, intelligent and pursued their own interests. Board, Farquharson, Beveridge, and others, created a 'parallel power structure' within New South Wales voluntarism. They possessed a 'public persona', yet at the same time possessed a considerable amount of social authority, which they exercised from their private space. They successfully crossed over the boundary between public and private space without challenging male hegemony. For them women's service to the family, within the confines of domesticity, was an expression of patriotism to the nation and came before service to the community, that is, motherhood was equated with patriotism. These women directed this patriotic nationalism towards the war effort.

Ada Beveridge felt that the strength of 'the nation and Empire' was built on the strength of the family and the role of women in protecting this institution. She felt that there was a need for 'strong women and children to build up the race', 'to keep up the fitness of the race... and the morale and general tone of the nation'. These concerns were not new and had been raised during the First World War in Britain,⁹⁹ and appeared within the ideology of women's organisations in New South Wales, including the WVS. Beveridge, like Reading, felt that protection of the family could be part of voluntary service, and that looking 'after our women and children... [was]... just as important as looking after our soldiers'. At the same time she encouraged women to undertake 'patriotic work' but maintained that the 'war... necessitated sacrifices' from each individual.¹⁰⁰ That is, the character of the nation was moulded by individuals volunteering within the service ethos of the WVS.

97.

ibid.

98.

Inglis, *Sacred Places*, p. 47.

99.

Davin quotes such examples from 1917 with advertising slogans in Britain from children's hospital like: 'The Children of Today are the Citizens of Tomorrow', and 'Help us to Care for Children and thus ensure a Healthy Race'. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 43.

100.

Ada Beveridge, 'State President's Message, A Guide for Members During War Time', *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 November 1939, p. 1.

For these women, national security was equated with race. Ruby Board, like Reading, felt that the British Empire provided national security for the British race and the joint action of individuals within the WVS would help protect the Empire. As war approached she was concerned that women should take some part in the protection of the British race. Board stated:

Our national security, accepted almost as a birthright, is threatened, and even the most complacent and apathetic amongst us begin to realise the necessity for united effort. Only by sinking our individual opinions and grievances and by pulling together can we achieve the desired result.¹⁰¹

Concomitant with that was the obligation of British citizenship and all that it meant to citizens of the British Empire.

The organisational characteristics of the New South Wales WVS had many similarities with the British WVS. Like Great Britain, the establishment of a network of local centres was one of the main strengths of the New South Wales WVS. The local WVS centre provided an opportunity for women to become involved in some patriotic activity associated with the war effort. The first WVS centre in New South Wales was established at North Sydney where a large number of women gave 'their enthusiastic support to the movement'. Subsequently, the executive committee of the New South Wales WVS wrote to all the mayoresses of Sydney's suburbs, along with many country towns, to which there was a 'gratifying response'.¹⁰² Board and Beveridge undertook recruiting tours across New South Wales, similar in principle to those undertaken by Reading, by using the existing networks of the CWA and Red Cross.¹⁰³ They 'kindled enthusiasm' everywhere. Women 'wanted to hear what they should do'¹⁰⁴ and by February 1940 this effort had resulted in the formation of 120 country centres and thirty Sydney suburban centres.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80/1180, 10/42308, 1938-1940 BR NCW, President's Address, Ruby Board, 26 September 1940.

¹⁰² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1939.

¹⁰³ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ ML, WVS, MSS 408 2(3), Eighth AR, Beatrice Tildesley, 10 April 1947.

¹⁰⁵ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR.

As in Great Britain, one of the ground breaking roles of the WVS in New South Wales, according to Ruby Board, was co-ordinating the early mobilisation effort of women. Oppenheimer notes that there was 'little co-ordination' between women's organisations and this was a 'major problem'.¹⁰⁶ Board maintained that the underlying 'principle' of the WVS, like that of the National Council of Women, was 'a generous spirit of co-operation'.¹⁰⁷ Usually a joint committee of local women's organisations was formed at the initial meeting of a new WVS centre, similar to the British model.¹⁰⁸ Board stated that in 1940:

The principles of co-operation, of preparation and of training embodied in the Women's Voluntary Services, even the structural plan of that first organisation, have not been superseded. It was the first to break the ground from which, stimulated by an awakened public comprehension, have developed the wider groups of war activities in operation to-day.¹⁰⁹

Lady Wakehurst, the wife of the New South Wales Governor and patroness of the National Council of Women, maintained that the WVS 'brought people together and... provided an outlet for the altruism that is in all of us',¹¹⁰ similar to the Women's Australian National Service.¹¹¹ Jessie Willis, the state president of the WVS, maintained that the WVS had, from its inception, 'embraced the principle of co-operation with other organisations engaged in patriotic and national work'.¹¹² Michael Bruxner, the New South Wales Minister for Transport and National Emergency Services, agreed with these sentiments and suggested that other organisations 'might group themselves within the Women's Voluntary Services',¹¹³ and thus make WVS centres the nucleus of all local homefront activities.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 108.

¹⁰⁷ AANSW, NESCF, File No 40/80/1180, Box No 10/42308, 1938-1940 BR NCW, President's Address, Ruby Board, 26 September 1940.

¹⁰⁸ The Camden WVS Centre had a committee made up of representatives of the Red Cross, CWA, Hospital Auxiliary, Scout's Auxiliary Committee, Mother's Club and others. *Camden News*, 20 April 1939.

¹⁰⁹ AANSW, NESCF, No 40/80/1180, 10/42308, 1938-1940 BR NCW, President's Address, Ruby Board, 26 September 1940.

¹¹⁰ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 27 April 1944.

¹¹¹ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 120.

¹¹² For example, the Australian Comforts Fund, Red Cross, Country Women's Association, YWCA, and NCW, sent representatives to annual meetings. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), Fifth AR, 27 April 1944.

¹¹³ As early as February 1939 Bruxner was concerned about a disjointed effort between the competing interests within the women's organisations. AANSW, NESCF, File 39/3/110, Box No 10/42291, Correspondence, MF Bruxner, (Minister for Transport) to Mrs M Cameron, (president, The Feminist Club of New South Wales), 6 February 1939.

¹¹⁴ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 5 April 1939.

The WVS attempted to 'bring together a trained and efficient body of women ready to co-operate with naval, military, or civic authorities in any national emergency'.¹¹⁵ This was achieved by gaining the co-operation of a number of 'training organisations', including the Red Cross, VAD, St John Ambulance, Australian Trained Nurses' Association, Girl Guides and the CWA.¹¹⁶ In addition a WVS women's register was established¹¹⁷ and 'hundreds of women' signed up.¹¹⁸ By February 1940, the WVS register had served its purpose and was merged with the Women's Voluntary National Register established by the Commonwealth Government.¹¹⁹ Oppenheimer argues that the existence of the new South Wales WVS and the national Women's Volunteer National Register created 'confusion'. In September 1939 women could register with the Women's Volunteer National Register, enlist with the New South Wales National Emergency Services or enrol in WVS training courses.¹²⁰

The first classes in first aid and air raid precautions were offered by the Feminist Club¹²¹ and the North Sydney WVS centre,¹²² and later, the Red Cross and St John Ambulance at a host of venues across Sydney.¹²³ The Red Cross and St John Ambulance also offered home nursing, and some volunteers were given the opportunity to undertake training, as a prelude to joining the VADs. Canteen cookery classes were held at the Australian Gas Light Company, and in August

¹¹⁵. AANSW, NESCF, File 39/3/110, Box 10/42291, WVS Pamphlet, 'Women, Select Your Training, Organise, Serve Your Country,' January 1939.

¹¹⁶. *ibid.*

¹¹⁷. The biennial meeting of the National Council of Women in Sydney in September, 1938 passed a motion, which was sent to Prime Minister Lyons, pledging assistance to the government in the 'state of national emergency in the compilation of a register of women for national service'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 September 1938; AANSW, NESCF, 39/3/110, 10/42291 Correspondence, Marie L Farquharson & JM Merewether (joint secretaries, WVS), to Hon BSB Stevens (Premier's Department), 10 January 1939. By the end of 1939 the WVS acted as a registration agent for the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments. AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303 1940 WVS AR; ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), 1942 AR.

¹¹⁸. *Camden News*, 11 May 1939; AANSW, NESCF, 39/3/110, 10/42291 WVS Schedule of Qualifications, January 1939; AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR.

¹¹⁹. AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/1180, 10/42308, 1938-40 BR NCW, Presidential Address, Ruby Board. For further discussion of this and related matters see: Thomson, *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia* pp. 36-37, 43; and Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*, pp. 126, 165-6.

¹²⁰. Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 118.

¹²¹. AANSW, NESCF, 39/3/110, 10/42291, Correspondence, M. Cameron (President, Feminist Club of New South Wales) to M.F. Bruxner (Minister for Transport), 27 January 1939.

¹²². *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1939.

¹²³. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 February 1939. Training centres for air raid precautions were established in facilities supplied by Old Drury Club, Lyceum Club, The Women's Club, Australian Museum, Methodist Young People's Department, Council of Jewish Women, Industrial Arts Society and YWCA. AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR.

1939, many women went off to motor mechanics' classes, both practical and theoretical, conducted by the National Defence League and the National Roads and Motorists' Association (NRMA).¹²⁴ Most training organised by the WVS stopped once the National Emergency Services for civil defence provided free classes in civil defence matters in New South Wales.¹²⁵

However, the reality of the National Council of Women's initial aim of establishing an organisation that met the needs of 'any emergency [through] national service'¹²⁶ fell short of the mark. After the initial wave of enthusiasm had passed and the WVS had withdrawn from registering and training women, there was little left for the women to do, apart from 'rendering service' as they had done in the Boer War and First World War.¹²⁷ This now set them apart from the British WVS and meant that WVS volunteers resumed sewing and knitting soldier comforts, fundraising, providing voluntary labour for service canteens and entertainment for 'lonely soldiers'.¹²⁸ Marie Farquharson, who had replaced Ruby Board as president in June 1940, maintained that the WVS was only adapting 'itself to changing conditions' and was actually involved in the 'field' that proved to be of 'greatest value' to the community.¹²⁹ Oppenheimer argues that the 'WVS developed a niche in the comforts area'. This may have been so, but in reality the WVS had been pushed aside by more powerful voluntary organisations like the Red Cross, the Women's Australian National Service, the National Emergency Services and the Women's War Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. Farquharson was simply stating that the WVS had been left with the more mundane and less prestigious wartime activities, making soldier comforts. This was also typical of the Camden WVS and its activities, and is examined later in the thesis. Yet despite this, the WVS continued to co-operate and undertake activities with these same organisations.¹³⁰

¹²⁴ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR; AANSW, NESCF, 1938-1940 BR NCW, p. 13.

¹²⁵ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR.

¹²⁶ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR, Marie Farquharson.

¹²⁷ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 118. AANSW, NESCF, 40/80/1180, 10/42308, 1938-1940 BR NCW, President's Address, Ruby Board, 26 September 1940.

The founders of the WVS had established the organisation 'with the prospect of official recognition by the State government'¹³¹ but the women were to be disappointed. It never came. This concurs with the conclusion drawn by Oppenheimer that government 'approval and support' was 'crucial' for the success of women's organisations during the war.¹³² The WVS was not alone in this respect. Bruxner, the Minister for National Emergency Services, snubbed Norma Cameron, the president of the Feminist Club, in her attempt to establish the Women's Auxiliary Defence Services.¹³³ And, as noted above, the more powerful voluntary organisations had received government recognition. This partly explains why the enthusiasm of the WVS executive waned, an enthusiasm clearly seen in its membership taking on duties in the recognised wartime organisations. Here they felt their voluntary efforts would be more effective and would be suitably recognised.

For example, the New South Wales executive of the Women's Voluntary National Register, which first met in May 1939, had Ruby Board as foundation president, and other members from WVS executive including Janet Merewether, FJ Davy and Miss Parry.¹³⁴ By June 1940 Ruby Board had resigned as state WVS president and taken up a directorship with the Women's Australian National Service, although she retained a vice-presidency within the WVS.¹³⁵ Oppenheimer notes that Board was also appointed to the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund executive 'in her capacity' as president of the National Council of Women, and yet despite holding these joint positions 'there were still problems'.¹³⁶ Ruby Board was joined on the

¹³¹ ML, WVS, MSS 408 2(3), Eighth AR, Mrs Tildesley, 10 April 1947.

¹³² Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 108.

¹³³ In September 1939, Cameron wanted to establish an organisation of women for home defence called the Women's Auxiliary Defence Services (WADS), and declared her frustration, and that of other women, that they could register and train under NES, Red Cross or St John Ambulance, but could do nothing else. Bruxner reminded Cameron that the State Government had controlled all civil defence matters and associated training, and there were only limited places from volunteers as wardens, aid posts and other duties. He consoled New South Wales women by stating that 'it is a good thing to have people trained irrespective of whether we want them immediately or not'. AANSW, NESCF, 39/3/110, 10/42291, Correspondence, M.F. Bruxner, (Minister for Transport) to C.N. Cameron, (President, Feminist Club of New South Wales), 25 September 1939.

¹³⁴ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 19 January 1939. ML, Women's Volunteer National Register, MSS 2025, Executive Minutes, 19 May 1939. The committee of the Women's Volunteer National Register was Ruby Board (president), Lady Parker, Mrs P.A. Cameron, Lillian Fowler, Mrs F.J. Davy (vice-presidents), Sister A.B. Parry, Dr Fanny Reading, Miss Grace Scobie, Miss de Silva Waugh, Miss L. Fowler, Miss Beulah Bolton, Mrs E. Glencross, Miss Merewether, Mrs G. Christie (executive committee). AANSW, NESCF, 39/1A/762, 10/42293, Correspondence, Lady Mayoress to F.M. Lorenzo, (Director, National Emergency Services), 1 May 1939; Julie Gorrell, 'Ada Beveridge', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 13*, p. 177; For further discussion on the Women's National Volunteer Register, see Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, pp. 104-122.

¹³⁵ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 28 June 1940.

¹³⁶ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 118.

Women's Voluntary National Register by Ada Beveridge, who later became executive chairman of the Women's Australian National Service (1940-42),¹³⁷ and by 1941 the Service was undertaking similar civil defence roles to the WVS.¹³⁸ Marie Farquharson, who replaced Board as WVS state president, became an executive member of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, the New South Wales branch of the Australian Comforts Fund, and eventually supervisor of the Women's War Comforts Section (1945).

The state executive of WVS failed to create a strong corporate identity for the organisation and consequently its leadership appeared weak and passive. Yet at the same time the executive recognised that the main strength of the WVS was a vibrant network of independent local WVS centres. In February 1940 Marie Farquharson explained in a circular to centres that

it would be a mistake to tie down our centres with a constitution which might impair their freedom to act according to the needs of their local areas. Therefore it is felt that the broad principles of co-operation, which has been so successfully carried out, remains our outstanding object.¹³⁹

Even the set of aims that were formulated in 1941 placed the WVS in secondary position relative to more powerful voluntary organisations. Its principle object was

to raise funds and organise the manufacture and collection of goods for the purpose of providing comforts for the men and women of the services and for the general organisation in support of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of New South Wales.¹⁴⁰

The women on the state executive seemed to have an inherent desire not to offend anyone, and in doing so appeared to understate the value of their wartime effort. This is evident in Farquharson questioning whether the WVS should continue to 'as a separate organisation' at all.¹⁴¹ At various times the state executive gave serious consideration to merging with the Women's Voluntary National Register¹⁴², the

¹³⁷ Julie Gorrell, 'Ada Beveridge', in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol 13, p. 177.
¹³⁸ For instance, mobile canteens. AANSW, NESCF, 41/69M/1753, 10/42333, 1941 AR, Women's Australian National Services.
¹³⁹ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), Circular, February 1940.
¹⁴⁰ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM 7 April 1941.
¹⁴¹ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), Circular, February 1940.
¹⁴² ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 4 September 1939.

Women's Australian National Service¹⁴³ and the National Emergency Services.¹⁴⁴ Conversely, at one point the WVS was seen as a threat by the CWA.¹⁴⁵ At other times the WVS worked closely with both the National Emergency Services and the Women's Australian National Service.¹⁴⁶

It took until the end of 1944 for the executive of the WVS to establish a constitution. Even at this point in the war the constitution lacked a strong sense of either the organisation's self-worth, or importance in the war effort. The constitution stated that the WVS would provide,

- (a) Either directly or in cooperation with the Australian Comforts Fund, Comforts for all Services (men and women) or their dependents engaged in war activities on behalf of the British Empire or its Allies.
- (b) Assistance to civilians living in War Zones.
- (c) Contributions from time to time of any fund which has similar objects, especially the Australian Comforts Fund.
- (d) Help in any National Emergency.¹⁴⁷

The lack of assertiveness in either the constitution, or its leadership, relegated the organisation to a secondary position relative to other wartime women's organisations. It is little wonder that the WVS had little impact outside New South Wales.

Despite these problems Beatrice Tildesley maintained that while the New South Wales WVS had 'fewer opportunities for service than its great examples overseas, [it did] its honest best to be worthy of its title.'¹⁴⁸ By the end of 1945 the service effort of the WVS volunteers had resulted in excess of two million garments being supplied to the Australian Comforts Fund 'on behalf of the British Empire [and] its Allies'.¹⁴⁹ After the war ended the WVS collected garments for the United Nations

^{143.} ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 28 June 1940.

^{144.} By March 1939, a representative of Bruxner suggested that he supported the WVS, but at the same time maintained that 'women could not go wrong if they joined us', that is, the National Emergency Services. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), Advisory Council of WVS, 13 March 1939.

^{145.} ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 12 October 1939; Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 118.

^{146.} ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), Circular, 3 September 1940.

^{147.} ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 15 December 1944.

^{148.} ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), Fourth AR, 21 April 1943.

^{149.} ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 15 December 1944.

Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and sponsored the foundation of the War Widows Craft Guild.¹⁵⁰ Tildesley maintained that:

The modest flame of unselfish community effort, which sinks and rises must not be allowed to die.¹⁵¹

Another commentator felt that the war effort of the WVS volunteers had been 'superlative'.¹⁵²

Conclusion

The different circumstances in Great Britain and New South Wales created two distinct organisations. The biggest contrasts between the British WVS and the New South Wales WVS were their operational environments. The British WVS functioned as a frontline emergency, welfare and humanitarian organisation in an active war zone, the New South Wales WVS did not. The British WVS, because of its national nature, expanded as the need for its services grew during the war, especially the Blitz, civilian evacuation and food canteens and a host of other services. The WVS functioned as a voluntary auxiliary service of the British government.¹⁵³ In Australia the WVS was only established in New South Wales,¹⁵⁴ and undertook a narrow range of activities and suffered from confusion with organisations with similar aims. The British WVS had the dynamic and inspired leadership of Stella Reading, a member of the British establishment, who had access to decision makers in both the British and American Governments. Reading was able to promote the British WVS as an adventure and an ability to gain new experiences in the public arena, an opportunity that the New South Wales WVS lacked. The members of the executive of the WVS were disappointed in early progress of the WVS in New South Wales and eventually moved on to other organisations.

^{150.} Newspaper clipping, undated and unsourced found in the back of the WVS centre address book kept by Marie Farquharson. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3).

^{151.} *ibid.*

^{152.} *ibid.*

^{153.} Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*, p. 3.

^{154.} Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*, pp. 171.

The shared set of values and ideas within Victorian female philanthropy between Britain and New South Wales allowed the National Council of Women in New South Wales to reflect Reading's vision for the WVS. She equated wartime patriotism with volunteering, domesticity and active citizenship. The British WVS was also influenced by considerations of class, status, gender and parochialism, as was the New South Wales WVS. One of the main strengths of the WVS in Britain and New South Wales was the network of local centres, particularly in rural New South Wales. This allowed participation by individual women at a local level and gave their communities the opportunity to claim ownership of women's service ideology. This in turn became part of their identity and sense of place. This process is explored in the following chapters.

The example and precedent provided by the British WVS proved to be important well beyond the establishment of the WVS in New South Wales. There was a constant stream of correspondence between the New South Wales Agent-General in London and Macquarie Street on war-related matters. Most of this correspondence concerned British civil defence arrangements, including the activities of the British WVS.¹⁵⁵ As a result the New South Wales Government modelled their civil defence arrangements on the British example, particularly ARP plans.¹⁵⁶ Similar to Britain, one part of the ARP contingencies in New South Wales was the evacuation of the civilian population from coastal areas. In 1942 the State Government, as already mentioned, based the Civilian War Emergency Aid Service and the associated Civilian Aid Service Rest Centres on British WVS experience.¹⁵⁷ The influence of the British WVS in New South Wales extended to the provision of training courses for air raid precautions [ARP], first aid, home nursing, canteen cookery, driving, the provision of service canteens and other activities. The model provided by the British WVS even extended to the provision of post-war welfare services in New South Wales, such as Meals-On-Wheels and aged care.¹⁵⁸ The influence of the British WVS on civil defence activities in New South Wales between 1939 and 1945 was quite profound and has never really been fully appreciated.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁵ For instance, a file note found at AANSW, NESCF, 41/75/1383, 10/42328.

¹⁵⁶ AANSW, NESCF, 40/80P/1118, 10/42308, 1940 Report by Lieutenant-Colonel M.F. Bruxner, Minister of National Emergency Services, pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁷ AANSW, NES History Files, File No 1, Box 18/2796, Official History of Australia in War, Civil Defence Section - Civilian War Emergency Aid Service, Typescript; AANSW, Department of Labour and Industry and Social Services, History Files, File No 1, Box 18/2796, 1942 Report, Civilian Aid Emergency Aid Service.

¹⁵⁸ The foundation of Meals on Wheels and general welfare services for the aged, children and other disadvantaged groups. Women's Royal Voluntary Services, *Report on 25 Years Work*.

¹⁵⁹ The one exception is research that has been undertaken by Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer, *Volunteers*

The establishment of the Camden WVS centre illustrated the encompassing nature of women's service ideology within British female philanthropy, and how the ideology was shared by women in Great Britain and Australia. The foundation of the WVS also reflected the desires of women for inclusion in the war effort and concurs with Oppenheimer that 'women wanted to be organised, registered... trained, directed and prepared for any emergency resulting from the war'.¹⁶⁰ The role of the Camden WVS and how it achieved these goals through its activities are the subject of the remainder of the thesis.

in Action.

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Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 120.

CHAPTER FOUR

‘A NATIONAL EMERGENCY’

THE FORMATION OF THE CAMDEN WVS

The story of the Camden WVS is one of a country town during the Second World War, its homefront war effort, and the social, cultural and ethical traditions that influenced the community. This chapter will show that the Camden WVS was established against the background of Camden's social structure and British heritage, which has been outlined in previous chapters. These general principles were influential in the establishment of the Camden WVS, the attitudes of the women who joined, the activities they undertook, their response to outside factors and those who took office in the WVS. This chapter is concerned with the founders of the WVS in Camden, their social background, their service commitment and the main organisational features of the WVS.

The Foundation of the Camden WVS

The foundation of the Camden WVS was part of the process identified by Shute where women wanted to 'be allowed' to take 'an active part in the war effort'. Camden's female elite, like their metropolitan equivalent, would not be put off and 'responded to the national call with an intense patriotism'.¹ These Camden women had taken an active homefront role in the First World War, and had expanded the public role of Camden's female voluntarism during the inter-war period. In Oppenheimer's words, they 'wanted to actively participate in some way'.²

Mirroring the British precedent Camden's female elite moved to establish the Camden WVS centre in April 1939. Camden's mayoress, Minnie Kelloway, called

¹ Carmel Shute, 'From Balaclavas to Bayonets, Women's Voluntary War Work, 1939-1941', in Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*, pp. 364-365.

² Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 115.

the town hall meeting. This was in response to a statewide appeal by Ethel Nock, the Lady Mayoress of Sydney. The state WVS executive had enlisted the support of Kelloway, as well as Sibella Macarthur Onslow, a member of the powerful Macarthur dynasty. These women urged the Camden community to support the WVS, an organisation that, according to the *Camden News* had been 'enthusiastically received in the city and suburbs, and [was] gradually being extended throughout the State'.³ The aim of the meeting, according to the *News*, was to form an organisation of 'mutual help' so that local women might be 'prepared in case of a national crisis', in other words, war.⁴ Similar events occurred elsewhere in New South Wales, for example, the Quirindi centre was formed in April after the mayoress called a public meeting.⁵

The meeting was a success on a number of fronts. It was held on a Thursday afternoon at Camden town hall and attracted 'a large and representative gathering of women'. It was presided over by Sibella Macarthur Onslow and addressed by Ruby Board, the state president.⁶ Board and Macarthur Onslow knew each other through the National Council of Women, and more than likely Board would have approached Macarthur Onslow on an informal basis to gauge local feeling towards the new organisation.

In her address, Board 'gave an interesting account of the work being done in Sydney and the suburbs'.⁷ She maintained that the aim of the WVS in New South Wales was 'to co-ordinate all women's efforts, in co-operation with the National Emergency Services'. She went on to explain 'the system of registering women according to their qualifications so that they could be called upon for National service in any emergency'.⁸ Speaking in support of Board, Macarthur Onslow stressed 'the importance of becoming trained for national work',⁹ and provided Board with a degree of social legitimacy amongst local women, given that she was an 'outsider'. Board was not unknown in Camden. She had visited the town in 1934 for the annual general meeting of the Camden CWA, when she was president of the Nepean Group.

3. *Camden News*, 6 April 1939
 4. *Ibid.*
 5. Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 17.
 6. *Camden News*, 20 April 1939
 7. *ibid.*
 8. *Camden News*, 25 July 1940
 9. *Camden News*, 20 April 1939

At that time she was also president of the Blue Mountains CWA (1930-8).¹⁰ Macarthur Onslow's support of Board had encouraged those at the meeting to open 'a depot at the Town Hall to receive the offers of any women who [were] willing to register for some form of national training and service' (see Chapter Five).¹¹

Miss A Gould also addressed the meeting and outlined the various types of training activities undertaken with respect to ARP.¹² She spoke briefly about how ARP could be used for both 'personal protection and home defence', and Dr Robert Crookston offered to give ARP lectures. Names were taken of those interested, and lectures were to be provided at no cost starting the following Saturday at the Camden town hall at 8.00 pm (see Chapter Five).¹³

Following the speeches, Macarthur Onslow moved a motion, which was seconded by the mayoress Minnie Kelloway, 'that a Camden Centre of the Women's Voluntary Services should be formed'.¹⁴ Zoe Crookston was elected president, Sibella Macarthur Onslow and Minnie Kelloway, vice-presidents, Grace Moore, secretary, Doris Larkin, treasurer, and Nancy Freestone, assistant secretary.¹⁵ The Camden WVS, like its state equivalent, only had a vague set of aims to guide it. There was no formal constitution.

One of the principle aims of the Camden WVS, like the state organisation, was to act as a co-ordinating body amongst women's groups in Camden. The meeting agreed to do this by forming a committee drawn from Camden's women's organisations.¹⁶ They included representatives from the Red Cross, the CWA, the Hospital Auxiliary, the Mothers' Club and the Scout Committee.¹⁷ Yet despite this, the formal co-ordinating structure of the committee disappeared after the first year of operation and by the second year had simply become a general committee. But overall this did not affect the great success of the inter-organisational co-operation that was enjoyed by the Camden WVS. It was a reflection of the strength of Camden's social networks,

^{10.} *Camden News*, 20 December 1934.

^{11.} *Camden News*, 20 April 1939

^{12.} *Camden News*, 25 July 1940

^{13.} *Camden News*, 20 April 1939.

^{14.} *ibid.*

^{15.} *Camden News*, 6 April 1939, 20 April 1939.

^{16.} *Camden News*, 6 April 1939.

^{17.} The committee later added two district representatives from Werombi and Theresa Park. *Camden News*, 25 July 1940.

the overlapping membership of the local women's committees and the class solidarity of the female clique, which is discussed later in this chapter.

One of the strengths of the WVS's founding committee, like other women's organisation in Camden, was its all female composition. It gave these women independence in Camden's public space and allowed them to exercise their social authority in the town, in a similar way to the Camden Red Cross, CWA and Hospital Auxiliary. Russell argues that one of 'the most effective constraints on female power were those created by the male committees of philanthropic organisations... [who] assumed entire responsibility for financial and administrative matters'.¹⁸ This situation did not arise in Camden, particularly under the influence of Macarthur Onslow, who had few constraints on her exercise of power in Camden, and like her mother, Elizabeth was highly influential in Camden philanthropy, both male and female.

At this point it is a useful exercise to build a short profile of the women at the foundation meeting, as it provides a valuable insight into the socialisation processes, which prompted them to volunteer for the WVS. It is relatively easy to construct the background of Sibella Macarthur Onslow because of her public profile. On the other hand, it is not as easy to do this for other Camden women at the meeting. For the most part these latter women were very private and there are few public documents that outline their values, attitudes or activities. They left few written records, or any other evidence, from which it is possible to create a detailed profile. Therefore, their biographies are very sketchy and have been mainly drawn together from press reports and family oral history.

The Founders

Sibella Macarthur Onslow (1871-1943) was the most powerful individual at the meeting that established the WVS. She was responsible for the foundation, status, influence and success of the Camden WVS in the early years of the war. Her similarities with Reading were striking.

¹⁸

Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, p. 193.

Macarthur Onslow, who was sixty-eight at the time of the foundation of the WVS in Camden, was a member of the New South Wales gentry, unmarried and independently wealthy. She possessed a number of characteristics, which Russell has identified as being typical of the Australian gentry. Macarthur Onslow believed, like other gentry, that she had a natural 'superiority', and on this basis she felt that she possessed a 'legitimate supremacy', seeing herself as 'the natural social and moral' leader of the community. Her moral leadership was 'expressed through her involvement in religion, philanthropy, education' and her political conservatism. She exhibited her social leadership through 'good taste and good manners', the 'use of patronage and influence', and identification with other social leaders. She devoted her energies on 'individual relationships' formed through kinship and her social networks. She practised 'exclusiveness' based on a 'well-developed sense of who was to be included' so that she could 'turn a blind eye to outsiders'. Macarthur Onslow, like other gentry, felt that 'character, respectability and family background' were important in defining identity. 'Ties of marriage, family and kinship' were crucial in establishing a strong social network, which extended to government house.

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Macarthur Onslow was the central player in female philanthropy in Camden at the outbreak of the war. She possessed a high prestige and status, moved within an expansive social network and possessed extensive experience in British female philanthropy in Camden, Sydney and London. She was a member of the third generation of the Macarthur dynasty. According to George Sidman, the proprietor of the *Camden News*, himself a member of the Camden gentry who moved in same social circles and was enthusiastic admirer of Macarthur Onslow, she was the classic role model of a British Victorian female philanthropist. After her death he stated, in part, that she had

devoted her interests to the welfare of the community... There was scarcely a humanitarian movement in the district with which she was not associated... She had a great heart, a marvellous power of discerning sympathy with the needs of others, and, as hundreds of grateful hearts could testify, an inexhaustible willingness to do everything in her power to help them... She had a great charity in the larger sense of the word, the sense which conforms to St Paul's definition of the word, the charity which suffers long and is kind,

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Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, pp. 13-15.

which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.... She was so great also in her sense of duty. I think she was the most dutiful person I have ever known, greatly mindful of the obligations of citizenship, of Churchmanship, and of wealth: great is her love of her native land, in her ambitions for its future, and in her great desire to serve it... Above all, she was a great Christian, great in the simplicity of her faith and in her willingness to respond to all its demands... It was the secret of her charity, because those who recognise their own need of God's bounty cannot but be generous to others, and those who believe that Christ will one day come to be their judge, are most likely to be charitable in their judgements of their fellow-men.²⁰

Macarthur Onslow was 'tall, good looking with a great presence', charming and 'much admired by people she knew'.²¹ She epitomised the principles of duty and social responsibility expected of those within her class, and acted as a 'Lady Bountiful' figure in the Camden area.²² As a fervent imperialist, she implemented what she saw as the best of English values and ideas through her service to the community from a position of social authority. Her status within Camden society was never challenged and she commanded a respect commensurate with her economic wealth. Her altruism was part of her class ideology and by the 1920s she completely dominated female philanthropy in Camden. She had an unassailable position within Camden society. She was a larger than life figure on the Camden social scene, and possessed a public image that projected a regal presence.

Macarthur Onslow's upbringing, like Reading's early life, had an important influence on her attitudes and values. Macarthur Onslow was born into a wealthy colonial gentry family who modelled themselves on the British elite. Her mother, Elizabeth, was the granddaughter of John Macarthur and her father, Arthur, had been a captain in the Royal Navy. Sibella was the third of eight children and was educated at home by her mother, a governess and a German male tutor.

²⁰ *Camden News*, 22 July 1943.

²¹ Simpson, Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow, (Camden Historical Society [CHS]).

²² Horn, *Ladies of the Manor*, pp. 111-136; Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful', p. 193; Caroline Simpson, 'Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow', in Nairn and Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10*, pp. 198-199.

Macarthur Onslow's mother ensured that her daughter was schooled in the Victorian notion of femininity where Sibella was expected to serve. On the death of her father in 1882, 'Sibella assumed quite a role of responsibility for one so young in caring for her brothers'.²³ Between 1887 and 1890 her own life took second place to the education and lifestyle of her brothers.²⁴ She provided for them an 'uplifting moral influence... by keeping before them... a model of true feminine behaviour and refinement which the boys would learn to respect and cherish'.²⁵ When her mother became ill after a stroke, Sibella undertook her care for quite 'long' period until her mother's death in 1911.²⁶

Macarthur Onslow has been variously described as being 'big-hearted', a 'great hostess', possessing 'abounding hospitality', 'always sympathetic', 'patient', 'never... unkind', a 'lover of beauty', 'a great idealist' and 'a philanthropist whose generosity was only equalled by her discernment'.²⁷ Others have maintained that 'she was herself the least self-assertive person in the world', a 'great lady' and 'bore... [her deafness] with dignity and composure, and never allowed herself the luxury of complaint'.²⁸

Macarthur Onslow travelled extensively and spent time in England from 1887 to 1890, (where the family travelled via the United States of America), between 1892 to 1894 (when her mother purchased a house in London), in 1902 (when her mother attended the Coronation of Edward VII), in 1911 (where her mother died),²⁹ from November 1920 to October 1921,³⁰ between October 1932 and March 1933,³¹ and from March until December 1937.³² As well, she 'kept in touch with English thought and English friends by extensive correspondence'.³³ Her love of all things English was such that *Camden Park* became 'an English rose-garden blooming in a wattle-grove'.³⁴ Macarthur Onslow surrounded herself with symbols of English country life, as if to shield her from the harshness and vulgarity of the Australian

²³ Simpson, Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow, (CHS).

²⁴ *Camden News*, 10 August 1911.

²⁵ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, p. 12.

²⁶ *Camden News*, 10 August 1911.

²⁷ Mowll, Notes of an Address, (CHS).

²⁸ *Camden News* 22 July 1943.

²⁹ Simpson, Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow, (CHS).

³⁰ *Camden News*, 1 September 1921.

³¹ *Camden News*, 6 October 1932, 14 September 1933.

³² *Camden News*, 30 September 1937.

³³ Mowll, Notes of an Address, (CHS).

³⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 July 1943.

bush. While she regarded herself as British, there were three distinct elements to her identity. Macarthur Onslow regarded herself as a metropolitan, the English viewed her as a colonial, and at the same time, the local Camden population viewed her as a member of the landed gentry, a patrician type figure. These parts of her identity affected her behaviour, her influence and her role in Camden and the wider community.

Macarthur Onslow's active participation in philanthropy was modelled on her mother's service to the community.³⁵ Both women had the advantage of a large number of staff to conduct the affairs of the family estate and the Regency style mansion in which they lived on *Camden Park*. Sibella was taught to manage a household with about twenty-five servants³⁶ under the watchful eye of her mother. Sibella later had control over the estate and its employees, who numbered about sixty families,³⁷ and the village of Menangle.³⁸

Macarthur Onslow helped form the Ladies' Empire Club in London, and participated in their activities on her visits to London between 1887 and 1902. She was active in the People's Reform League of New South Wales between 1906 and 1907, which was founded by her brother George, and aimed at raising 'the standard of morality in public life'. She joined him and 'spoke to women to awaken them to the importance of their vote'.³⁹

Between 1920 and 1930 she chaired the Sydney Diocesan Women's Auxiliary of the Australian Board of Missions, was deputy-president of the Victoria League in New South Wales, president of the Queen's Club, Sydney, (1922-26) and represented the National Council of Women of New South Wales in 1927 at the biennial conference

^{35.} For instance, donations to St John's Church of England, Camden [a clock and eight bells in 1897], St James Church of England, Menangle [a Chancel and Sanctuary in 1898, organ 1902], a 6 acre park in Camden [1905], donations to the School of Arts, soldier comforts in Boer War and contributions to the 'Dreadnought Fund' [1909].

^{36.} Cox and Tanner, *Camden Park*, p. 11.

^{37.} *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 1945. (Undated clipping in CHS Macarthur-Onslow file).

^{38.} In the 1933 Census the population of Menangle village was 404. Commonwealth Statistician, *1933 Census*.

^{39.} Caroline Simpson, 'Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow', in Nairn and Serle *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10*, p. 198. Women's Patriotic Club was the Women's Branch of the People's Reform League of New South Wales. Women's Patriotic Club, *Objects*.

of the International Council of Women at Geneva.⁴⁰ She had links to the highest level of government in Australia⁴¹ and entertained royalty at *Camden Park*.⁴²

Macarthur Onslow was active in the Church of England at Camden and Menangle, and along with her mother, was a foundation member of the St John's Mothers' Union. The Union attempted to promote Victorian evangelical values associated with the family. It aimed to uphold the 'sanctity of marriage', 'awaken in mothers of all classes a sense of their great responsibility as mothers in the training of their children', and 'unite mothers in prayer' so that they could 'lead their families in [the] purity and holiness of life'.⁴³ In addition, she was joint patron of the Camden Hospital Auxiliary (1933-43).⁴⁴

As part of her service to the community she was concerned with the socialisation of Camden's youth in the Victorian values of service, particularly Camden's daughters. She taught once a week at Camden Public School and sponsored the establishment of the Boy Scouts (1916) and the Girl Guides (1924), and continued as patron of both.⁴⁵ She encouraged the establishment of the Junior Red Cross circles at Camden Public School (1919), *Gilbulla* (1928) and Narellan Public School (1932).⁴⁶ These were 'designed', amongst other things, to teach girls 'about femininity'.⁴⁷

Macarthur Onslow, and her mother, were involved in wartime voluntarism from the time of the Boer War, when they organised soldier comforts for the Camden Mounted Rifles under the command of Major JW Macarthur Onslow, Sibella's brother. This was a natural extension of her role as a member of the female gentry, where they were expected to have a number of refined accomplishments, including

⁴⁰ Caroline Simpson, 'Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow', in Nairn and Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10*, pp. 198-199.

⁴¹ For instance, her memorial service at St Andrew's Cathedral in 1943 were attended by Margaret Wakehurst, the wife of the Governor of New South Wales, Zara Gowrie, the wife of the Governor-General, Dorette MacCallum, wife of Sir Mungo MacCallum, Francis Batty, the Lord Bishop of Newcastle, and Howard Mowll, the Archbishop of Sydney. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 July 1943.

⁴² In 1927 she entertained the Duke and Duchess of York (now Queen Mother) when they came to open the new parliament building in Canberra. John Wrigley, 'A Grand Lady Indeed!', *District Reporter*, 17 August 2001.

⁴³ *Camden News*, 5 July 1900

⁴⁴ *Camden News*, 14 July 1938, 20 April 1939, 10 July 1941; CHS, Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary, 'Golden Jubilee, 1933-1983', Programme, 12 July 1983.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Willis, War and Community; Simpson, Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow, (CHS).

⁴⁷ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, p. 114.

singing, playing music, art, sewing, and cooking.⁴⁸ At the outbreak of the First World War, she was a foundation secretary of the Camden Red Cross, Camden's pre-eminent wartime voluntary organisation. She retained this position until 1927, and was then president from 1927 to 1943, elected unopposed.⁴⁹ She was foundation president of the Menangle Branch of the Red Cross and patron of the Menangle and Ingleburn Red Cross branches.⁵⁰ She received a CBE in 1930 for community services, primarily to the Red Cross.⁵¹ She experienced the loss of war after Major Onslow Thompson was killed in action at Gallipoli, and her brother, William, died in action at Ypres.⁵²

Elizabeth Macarthur Onslow understood her daughter's 'capabilities', and in 1911, on her death, left *Camden Park* and £20,000 for its upkeep to Sibella over her brother, James.⁵³ Others recognised these abilities, and they maintained 'she possessed a mind which could grasp public questions and make penetrating comments upon them'. She had a 'vision so world-wide and large... she lifted us out of narrow and circumscribed views to glimpse what she saw'.⁵⁴

Macarthur Onslow therefore provided the Camden WVS with a formidable social legitimacy. Like Reading, she was influential in the composition of the new WVS executive, and all other matters that surrounded it. She ensured that Zoe Crookston, a family friend, was elected as president. Crookston effectively became Macarthur Onslow's nominee on the committee, as Macarthur Onslow rarely attended WVS meetings and her position as the vice-president was only 'nominal'. The occupation of 'nominal' positions by Macarthur Onslow was not new, for instance, she had been recruited as a 'name' to the Auxiliary Committee of the NSW St John Ambulance Association in the 1920s.⁵⁵ This phenomenon was not unique to Camden: Mrs Trowbridge noted that the 'titles' who volunteered for the Bradford WVS in Great

⁴⁸ Russell, *A Wish of Distinction*, pp. 86-87, 98-99.

⁴⁹ CHS, Camden Red Cross 1934-1943, Executive Minutes, Annual General Meetings.

⁵⁰ *Camden News* 14 July 1938, 20 April 1939, 10 July 1941; CHS, Camden District Hospital Women's Hospital Auxiliary, Golden Jubilee, 1933-1983, Programme, 12 July 1983.

⁵¹ Simpson, Rosa Sibella Macarthur Onslow, (CHS).

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Mowll, Notes of an Address, (CHS).

⁵⁵ She never attended any meeting of the Committee. St John Ambulance Association, New South Wales Centre, Annual Report, 1924-1925, and Auxiliary Committee Minute Books, 1927-1940.

Britain in 1941 typically showed up for activities when the glory was to be had, but left more mundane tasks to lesser souls.⁵⁶ So did Macarthur Onslow.

Sibella Macarthur Onslow and Ruby Board were mentors for a generation of Camden women including Zoe Crookston, Rita Tucker and later, Elsie Jefferis, all of who gained ascendancy in Camden's female philanthropy during the Second World War.⁵⁷ Despite the Victorianism of these women, they expressed their independence through their willingness to become involved in Camden's patriotic war effort.

Zoe Crookston's husband was Robert Crookston (1886-1975), a surgeon and Presbyterian. Zoe Crookston was a member of Camden's gentry, and moved in the same social networks as Sibella Macarthur Onslow. She was also a liberal-conservative, and a committee member of the Camden branch of the United Australia Party (UAP) (1936). She had two daughters, Suzanne and Jacqueline. Like Stella Reading, she was a 'no nonsense sort of person... who was willing to do anything at all', and hence, always 'liked to get on with the job' at hand.⁵⁸ Crookston's public support of her husband's role as Camden mayor in 1933 was consistent with her Victorianism, and like Reading considered service to her husband a primary responsibility. As a privileged member of Camden's elite she could afford paid help. This gave her the freedom to undertake 'good works' within the tradition of *noblesse oblige*. This included being a foundation member of the Camden Red Cross in 1914. She was still an active member of the Camden Red Cross in 1949. Crookston was also a committee member of Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary from 1933 to 1945.⁵⁹

Crookston's wartime experience and the loss of family friends in the Gallipoli campaign heightened her resolve to 'devote' herself to the WVS presidency. Like Reading, she felt that wartime volunteering for the WVS was an expression of British citizenship and patriotism, and that domesticity was a national wartime

⁵⁶ Sheridan, *Wartime Women*, p. 152.

⁵⁷ For instance, Elsie Jeffries succeeded Sibella Macarthur Onslow in 1943 as president of the Red Cross, and Marguerite (Rita) Tucker was president of the CWA from 1939-1961.

⁵⁸ Interview, J.C., Cobbitty, 24 February 1993.

⁵⁹ Interview, J.C., Cobbitty, 24 February 1993; *Camden News* 20 August 1914, 12 March 1936, 14 July 1938, 10 July 1941; CHS, Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary, membership lists; CHS, Camden Red Cross membership lists; Power, *A Century of Change*.

priority. Combined with her experience in the Red Cross, it was therefore natural for her to consider that women who volunteered to sew, knit and cook for the war effort were being patriotic. Hence, it was understandable that she encouraged Camden women to devote themselves to supplying comforts to local servicemen. Crookston did this in the sincere belief that this would ensure the protection 'of their daughters from the Japanese'.⁶⁰ Therefore under her leadership the provision of comforts to 'the boys' became the most successful activity of the WVS. It is examined in Chapter 6.

Grace Moore (1897-1978) from *Ellensville* at Glenmore was another of the founders of the WVS. She was the daughter of a Methodist dairyfarmer west of Camden and had also experienced a Victorian upbringing, and like Reading, was an avid reader. She was single, educated at the University of Sydney during the First World War, took a job as a governess in a boarding school, and later became an English teacher, and was a member of the Camden gentry. She was a quiet, gentle, religious woman who strongly believed in the notion of duty and service. She too, lost a close friend during the First World War, and understood the pain and suffering caused by war.⁶¹

Moore fulfilled her service commitment to the community in the number of roles. She regularly played the church organ at Mt Hunter Church of England, she was secretary of the WVS, a member of the Red Cross (serving as secretary from 1927-1938), the commandant of the VAD between 1939 and 1945 and a member of Hospital Auxiliary, serving as the founding secretary in 1933 and retaining this position until 1938. She has been described as a good 'committee woman'.⁶²

Doris Larkin (1899-1977), another founder of the Camden WVS, was born Doris Vicary at Coats Park, New South Wales. She married Willie, an auctioneer, in 1918.⁶³ She had a strong sense of her service role to her family and husband, and dutifully supported her husband when he became mayor of Camden (1929-32, 1934-38). Her service commitment to the community was fulfilled through her role as treasurer of the WVS, as well as being the founding treasurer of the Hospital Auxiliary, and later president from 1934-1938. She was also a member of the

⁶⁰ Interview, J.C., Cobbitty, 24 February 1993.

⁶¹ *Camden News*, 14 July 1938, 26 October 1939; Interview, P.A., Camden, 7 March 1995.

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Burnett and Robinson, *Camden Pioneer Register, 1800-1920*, p. 150.

Camden Red Cross, serving as vice-president from 1939-1944, and a member of the Camden CWA (1940-45).⁶⁴

These short biographies show that there were a number of common traits amongst the women who made up the executive of the Camden WVS, mirroring some of the characteristics of the women on both the state executive of the WVS and the British WVS. These Camden women were Protestant, they came from the gentry and upper middle classes, they were friends and had daily contact with each other. They possessed an ethos of service that was an extension of their upbringing and experience of volunteering in female philanthropy in Camden, and typical of similar women elsewhere in Australia. Their patriotic work reflected their private and public positions in Camden. Sewing, knitting and cooking for war causes were an extension of their class accomplishments and were usually restricted to the private sphere.

Sibella Macarthur Onslow, Zoe Crookston, Minnie Kelloway, Grace Moore, Doris Larkin and Nancy Freestone, the founders of the Camden WVS, had an important impact on the social recognition of other Camden women during the remainder of the war. These women were examples of individuals who were able to combine their Victorianism and their desire for independence through their wartime voluntarism, while at the same time acknowledging the changing social climate for women. They created an atmosphere in Camden that allowed their daughters, and other female relatives, to take women's issues and female philanthropy forward after the Second World War. These women were typical of Montgomery's boarding school girls, who appeared in 1930s English girls' literature, who were the new 'heirs to the empire's code of liberal humanist justice' and were examples of 'middle class women [who were] now accepted in the public sphere'. These stories were set against the 'masculinist, historical grandeur of the empire, its Protestant foundation' and its changing nature,⁶⁵ sentiments which were easily recognised by these Camden women. These women were the 'changing of the guard' in women's voluntarism in Camden, especially after the death of Sibella Macarthur Onslow.

The Organisational Character

⁶⁴ *Camden News*, 13 June 1940; CHS, Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary, 'Golden Jubilee, 1933-1983'; Willis, War and Community; Power, *A Century of Change*; Wrigley, *Camden Characters*.

⁶⁵ Montgomery, *Makers and Breakers: Adolescent Female Reading: 1939-1945*, Draft Chapter 1.

The Camden WVS mirrored the British WVS in a number of ways. Its leadership came from the members of the town's female elite who were part of the clique already discussed in Chapter Two. Drawn from the gentry and upper middle class, they exercised considerable social authority in the district and controlled Camden's female voluntarism by sponsoring the foundation of new organisations that matched their worldview and taking, either directly or indirectly, leadership positions in them.

There was a considerable degree of overlapping membership between the WVS and other female voluntary organisations in the town. There is no doubt that overlapping membership ensured that from the beginning the WVS had aspects of a joint effort about its activities. The large degree of inter-organisational co-operation accounted for Beatrice Tildesley's summation of the Camden WVS at war's end. It was, she said in her capacity as State Secretary of the WVS, one of the great success stories of the organisation in New South Wales (along with the Parramatta and Penrith WVS).⁶⁶

An analysis of the WVS membership reveals that in 1940 all of the Camden WVS executive were members of the Camden Red Cross, and four had been present at the foundation meeting of the Red Cross branch in 1914, Francis Faithfull-Anderson, patron of the WVS and a member of the Camden gentry, Sibella Macarthur-Onslow, Zoe Crookston, and Annie Whiteman. Amongst the founding WVS executive Zoe Crookston, Sibella Macarthur Onslow, Grace Moore, Nancy Freestone and Doris Larkin were all members of at least two other organisations: the Red Cross, the CWA and the Hospital Auxiliary. Minnie Kelloway was a member of all four. Among the women who were members of all four organisations were some notable personalities, including Rita Tucker, the wartime president of the CWA, Irene Huthnance, who co-ordinated the salvage effort for the WVS, and Mary Evans, who was the treasurer and roster secretary for the YMCA-ACF Hospitality Centre, and later secretary of the Welcome Home Committee (1946). These women are examined in greater detail in later chapters.

⁶⁶.

ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), Sixth AR, Mrs Tildesley, 6 April 1945.

Amongst the general WVS membership 73 per cent were members of the Camden Red Cross, and over 25 per cent had been members of the Red Cross for over fifteen years. As well, 67 per cent of the WVS membership were members of the Hospital Auxiliary and 30 per cent members of the CWA. Further examination of the WVS membership reveals that 83 per cent were members of the WVS and one other organisation, either the Red Cross, Hospital Auxiliary or CWA, 63 per cent joined the WVS and two other organisations, while 20 per cent joined the WVS and three other organisations. Based on these characteristics, 'it was little wonder' that Camden women 'worked well together', according to one member of the female clique.⁶⁷ This cross-membership was similar to that which existed between the British WVS and other women's organisations.⁶⁸

The overlapping membership between the WVS and other organisations meant that on some occasions the women of the Camden WVS fulfilled their notion of service by supporting other organisations. The CWA, for example, shared the WVS emphasis on family and campaigned for a CWA baby health centre as a wartime priority in 1940. Many members of the WVS supported the campaign and ensured its success. Overlapping membership also saw the voluntary service ethos of the WVS incorporated into other wartime activities that were not specifically part of the WVS's bailiwick. (These are discussed in later chapters of the thesis.) And overlapping membership tended to reinforce shared attitudes and belief systems between the organisations that reinforced a sense of parochialism, as the Lord Mayor's Patriotic War Fund was to discover (see Chapter Six).

The members of the female clique on the WVS executive exercised a subtle form of exclusion amongst Camden's female community, typical of their social group. They encouraged those women from the same class groupings, who had similar economic means, to join them in the WVS and other organisations they controlled. They were the Protestant wives of Camden's professionals, bank managers, businessmen, and dairy farmers. Their conservatism was expressed in their support of the status quo, including Camden's existing social institutions and their politics. A number were members of the Camden branch of the UAP.⁶⁹ Over 80 per cent of the WVS

⁶⁷. Interview, J.C., Cobbitty, 24 February 1993;
⁶⁸. Mass-Observation found new WVS members came from existing voluntary organisations, which resulted in 'a good deal of over-lapping...membership'. Tom Harrison Mass-Observation Archive [THMOA], File Report 5, Schofield, 'Women's Organisations in Wartime'.

⁶⁹. *Camden News*, 12 March 1936, 27 March 1941.

membership was Protestant, like the Camden Red Cross, which had 90 per cent Protestant membership, and the CWA, 84 per cent.⁷⁰ The proportion of Catholic women in these women's organisations was well below the 25 per cent of the Camden population who were Catholic, and hints at the level of sectarianism within the area. Around one-quarter of the women on the WVS executive were from Non-conformist, evangelical backgrounds, with strong traditions of Victorian philanthropy. Evangelicalism was evident in Camden voluntarism well before 1900, particularly amongst the local dairyfarmers and business community. As noted earlier, these affiliations extended back to the establishment of *Camden Park*, and its numerous Methodist families brought to Australia from the 1830s. From amongst the WVS membership, 42 per cent of the women came from families who were either employed, or had been employed on *Camden Park*.⁷¹

The emergence of the war did nothing to change either the *modus operandi* or the social authority of the female clique. Rather the war provided a new field of influence and endeavour, and an additional opportunity for them to exert their social authority within the region and reinforce their social status. The female clique, and the level of co-operation that it engendered from the broader Camden community, led to it assuming the role of a co-ordinating patriotic committee, which was lacking in the town. The women's clique, in co-operation with the male equivalent, co-ordinated all wartime fundraising and eliminated all duplication of effort between competing organisations. The social authority of the women's clique, which was partly derived from their moral leadership, was particularly evident on matters related to soldier and civilian welfare. This in turn was closely connected with their class identity and subjectivity. The men's clique also deferred to these women on matters concerning patriotic fundraising.

The role of the female clique in wartime volunteering, as Oppenheimer puts it, shows that 'class had little to do with volunteer activity overall, but more to do with the type and extent of volunteer work carried out'.⁷² Oppenheimer argues that there were 'two major ways of participating' in wartime volunteering, 'donating' and 'organising and participating'.⁷³ One of propositions put forward in the thesis (which is explored in greater detail later in the discussion), is that class differentiated both

⁷⁰ Based on my survey of the membership of these organisations from their records.

⁷¹ Wrigley & Nixon, *They Worked At Camden Park*.

⁷² Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 86.

⁷³ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 88.

'organising', and 'participating' in female philanthropy in Camden. 'Organising' was predominantly, but not exclusively, the realm of the elite, while 'participating', especially in domestically related activities (cooking, cleaning, packing parcels, mending, sewing, knitting) was largely, although not exclusively, the domain of lower middle class and working class women. This situation showed continuity from the First World War and the inter-war period, and was typical of the role of the female clique as outlined in Chapter Two.

The status and social authority of the executive of the Camden WVS, along with the overall membership size of the WVS, determined its social status amongst the town's female voluntary organisations. Crookston claimed that the WVS with around 100 members was never 'a high powered organisation'.⁷⁴ But in the social pecking order the WVS was second only to that of the Red Cross, which meant that the WVS exercised considerable social authority with respect to wartime fundraising appeals and other activities. The WVS was never able to challenge the authority of the Camden Red Cross, which had a membership of over 450, and Sibella Macarthur Onslow as president. A parallel situation existed in Quirindi, where the Red Cross had 244 members under the leadership of Mrs Marion Macvean of *Euraba*, while the WVS had a membership 134.⁷⁵

And yet, despite the social competition provided by the Red Cross and the smaller membership size of the WVS, its social status was still sufficient for it not to be disadvantaged in its wartime activities. The social status of any particular female voluntary organisation in Camden ultimately determined its ability to raise funds for particular patriotic activities, and therefore its wartime success.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Camden WVS centre was a reflection of social forces that were active in Camden up to the end of the 1930s. The chapter has shown that the foundation of the WVS was mainly subject to elements of Victorian female philanthropy and the service obligations that were created within it.

⁷⁴ Interview, J.C., Cobbitty, 24 February 1993.
⁷⁵ Durrant, *Quirindi*, pp. 18-19.

Without a doubt the most important person in this picture was Sibella Macarthur Onslow, the leader of the Camden female gentry. She was strikingly similar to Reading, in that she possessed both 'public and private personas', and was able to freely move between Camden's public and private spaces. She developed a 'parallel power structure' for herself from which she exercised her considerable social authority. Her wealth, prestige and social status were sufficient for her to gain access to, and influence over, men in business and government. She did not challenge their position or authority, but like Reading, skilfully cultivated her influence and authority from within the realm of the Victorian woman. At a local level, she encouraged the tradition of Victorianism within the Camden community.

It is also true to say that the other women who founded the Camden WVS possessed similar characteristics, but were overwhelmed by the dominance of Macarthur Onslow. This situation did not change until after her death. All these women were an active part of the evolution of Camden female philanthropy, and through the WVS were able to equate domesticity, and the sewing, knitting and cooking that symbolised it, with patriotism, nationalism and active wartime citizenship.

All these women were members of the Camden's female clique who dominated female voluntarism in Camden during the war. Their exclusivity within the WVS and other organisations was practised by monopolising leadership positions, through overlapping membership, their possession of social authority and their economic dominance. Their clannishness was an expression of their class solidarity, the area's rural ideology and the town's conservatism, which have been discussed earlier in thesis. Their patriotic contribution in terms of sewing, knitting and cooking were usually undertaken in the private sphere, and were part of the accomplishments associated with their class identity.

The remainder of the thesis will examine the wartime activities of the WVS that resulted from these processes and analyse them in the context of Camden's rural ideology.

CHAPTER FIVE

'OUR NEED TO SERVE'

TRAINING, MOBILE CANTEEN FUND AND CO-OPERATION WITH THE CAMDEN RED CROSS.

The members of the Camden WVS took up their service commitment with gusto and rallied the remainder of the Camden community to support their effort and become involved in their activities. Some of these were exclusively the province of the WVS but, as in Britain, the WVS also launched cooperative ventures with other voluntary organisations including the Red Cross and the CWA. This chapter examines the activities of the Camden WVS and its cooperative ventures with the Red Cross. The WVS joint activity with the CWA to complete camouflage nets is discussed in Chapter Seven.

This chapter also illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of the voluntary service ideology and how it was subject to a variety of influences including class, status, religion, location and history (tradition). The early part of the chapter explores the desire of Camden women to be involved in the war, and then goes on to discuss the strong British influence on the Camden WVS through the mobile canteen fund. The latter part of the chapter will show that the joint activity between the WVS and the Red Cross was a natural extension of the development of the Camden's female philanthropy. This was based on precedents set during the Boer and First World wars when the elite organised appeals, fundraising and soldier comforts. The discussion in this section of the chapter also extends the analysis of the service ideology to Camden's younger women through the re-formation of the Camden VAD.

Registration and training.

In the months leading up to the war, and during the first months of the war, the women of the Camden WVS followed the directives of the WVS state executive.

They were primarily concerned with the establishment of a WVS women's register and appropriate training that would allow women to serve 'the needs of the community in war time.'¹

In April 1939 the Camden WVS enthusiastically took up the women's register proposed by the state WVS executive. The *Camden News* reported that the state executive felt that although the international situation 'was not so alarming at present, it would be most inadvisable to conclude that all danger of hostilities had passed'. Women were urged to enrol to meet 'any national emergency' from bushfires to floods. The executive also stressed that the WVS was a voluntary organisation and those registering were placed under no obligation.² The WVS women's register listed six categories: nursing, professional, commissariat, clerical, technical and miscellaneous. Women registering filled out a yellow card, paid a WVS membership fee of 1/- and were given a badge.³

Registration, however, was halted in May on the advice of the WVS state executive. Forms were now required to be completed by both the Commonwealth Government's Women's Volunteer National Register and the State Government's National Emergency Services for civil defence.⁴ These forms were distributed at the Camden WVS meeting on 30 May 1939, and listed seven, rather than six, categories: secretarial, domestic, entertainment, transport, civil defence, special services and general service.⁵

A letter from the Camden WVS executive to the *Camden News* encouraged registration for the both State and Commonwealth registers (both registers ran parallel to each other). It stated that the registration fee had been dropped and, as before, stressed the voluntary nature of the registration. The women planned to call on every house in the town, providing assistance in completing the forms for volunteers. On the forms, the women were to list their capabilities, the type of work

1. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR.

2. *Camden News*, 20 April 1939, 11 May 1939.

3. *Camden News*, 11 May 1939.

4. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR.

5. See correspondence concerning Women's Voluntary National Register and Women's Voluntary Services. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42291, 39/1A/142, 10/42297, 39/56/1526, 10/42293, 39/1A/763; *Camden News*, 1 June 1939.

they preferred to do and nominate how much time they could spare.⁶ The information from the registration forms was sent to the newly formed New South Wales Women's Australian National Services whose patron was Margaret Wakehurst, the wife of the governor of New South Wales.⁷ District representatives carried out a registration drive in the outlying areas of Menangle, Werombi and Bringelly, where it was made clear that the town's branch of the WVS would control the coordination of the response to any emergency.

Although the registration drive illustrated the enthusiasm of the Camden WVS their keenness blinded their pragmatism. Given the structure of the Camden workforce, there was little prospect of the WVS filling most of the skill classifications set out in the schedule distributed in May. Instead the activities of the WVS would be dominated by the rural conservatism of its members and the practical realities of life in Camden. The tasks they would fulfil were closely aligned to what had been called 'Red Cross work': staffing stalls, knitting, sewing, and looking after the interests of 'our boys'.⁸ This reflected the distinction between women's and men's business in wartime Camden with its total acceptance of separate spheres for men and women.

At the Camden WVS's first meeting in April 1939, as mentioned earlier, the local women organised ARP training. It consisted of a series of six free lectures given by Robert Crookston, a local doctor, Zoe Crookston's husband. He used two British Home Office publications, *Air Raid Precautions Handbook No 1, Personal Protection Against Gas* and *Handbook No 2, First Aid for Gas Casualties*.⁹ Notes were sold at the library for 1/-. The lectures were held at the town hall with sixty students on the first night. Some may have found the notion of a gas attack on Camden either far-fetched or too daunting because the average attendance over the six lectures was forty-five students. The NES gave approval for the students to be examined in mid-August and twenty members of the class eventually received certificates.¹⁰ Only one male attended the classes, the teacher from Werombi, Ben Young. Young would later initiate a scrap iron salvage scheme, which is examined

⁶ *Camden News*, 13 July 1939; AANSW, NESCF, 10/42297, 39/56/1526, Correspondence, T.A. Blamey Chairman, Man Power Committee) to M.F. Bruxner (Minister in Charge of the National Emergency Scheme), 7 August 1939.

⁷ *Camden News*, 25 July 1940.

⁸ For a full discussion of Red Cross work see Willis, *War and Community*.

⁹ AANSW, NESCF, 10/42297, 39/15D/1443, Correspondence, E.H. Grace Moore (secretary, Camden WVS), to Colonel F. Lorenzo (Director, National Emergency Services), 7 August 1939.

¹⁰ AANSW, NESCF, 10/42297, 39/15D/1443, Correspondence, E.H.G. Moore (secretary, Camden WVS), to Colonel F. Lorenzo (Director, National Emergency Services), 28 July 1939.

in Chapter Ten.¹¹ The success of the lectures owed much to the prestige of the local doctor, but it was also fuelled by a view that Camden residents should be seen to doing something in preparation for war, while at the same time empathising with their British kin and mirroring the activities of the British WVS. It was, however, the only ARP training course ever held in the district.

The first meeting of the Camden WVS also made plans to establish a soup kitchen and a coffee stall. A sub-committee was appointed to organise this in the event of a 'national emergency' with Mary McIntosh in charge.¹² This may well have reflected the notions of bushfires and floods as set out in the state executive's directive. However, as far as the records show, nothing came of this. Attendance at Crookston's classes and the quiet disappearance of the soup kitchen and coffee stall plans suggests very strongly that the Camden WVS saw their organisation as one devoted to the coming war.

By September 1939, with the outbreak of war, the Camden WVS organised training courses in motor maintenance, ambulance driving and first aid for those who had enrolled with the Women's Volunteer National Register (the Commonwealth body). Ruby Board believed that courses like these helped protect 'the national security' of the country.¹³ The courses themselves fell under the umbrella of the NES and the NRMA depot in Camden.¹⁴ They consisted of a course of twelve lectures followed by an examination. Those who passed the examination were registered with the NES.

Students undertaking the ambulance driver's course had to have been a licensed driver for at least one year, hold a first aid certificate, be over 21 but under 45, and to have passed a motor lorry driver's test. Naturally, this excluded a significant proportion of Camden's women. Car ownership was generally restricted to the business and professional community, and the district's wealthier farmers. Although the town boasted five new car dealerships and four blacksmith's shops, who

¹¹ *Camden News*, 20 April 1939, 27 April 1939, 1 June 1939, 8 June 1939, 17 August 1939, 8 July 1940.

¹² *Camden News* 11 May 1939.

¹³ AANSW, NESCF, 10/42308, 40/80B/1180, 1938-1940 BR NCW, Ruby W. Board, Presidents Address.

¹⁴ *Camden News*, 21 September 1939, 12 October 1939.

repaired cars, tractors and general farm equipment, the district's smallholder dairyfarmers still delivered their milk to local dairy factories by horse and cart, and many women in Camden walked to the shops or relied on home deliveries.¹⁵

Frank Reddon, the owner the Main Southern Garage, offered to provide lectures on motor maintenance and lorry driving tests for women aspiring to become ambulance drivers. Reddon's garage was the local Ford dealership and the NRMA depot. It had a well equipped workshop and a spare parts section.¹⁶ Lectures were delivered on Monday nights at his garage and followed the model already developed by the NRMA for its Sydney classes at the Sydney Showground. Women interested in the project left their names with Nancy Freestone at the Camden town hall library. Reddon organised driving tests on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons in mid-October.¹⁷ Lectures were given by Reddon and George Ping, Reddons' service manager and local NRMA representative. The first lecture lasted two hours, covered the intricacies of the drive train, electricals, brakes and other components.¹⁸ It only attracted 'seven or eight ladies'. Later that week George Sidman reassured local women in the *Camden News* that training did not mean they were committed to actual duty.¹⁹ Consequently the class increased to fifteen the following week.²⁰ The women who attended the classes still remember their teachers. Frank Reddon 'knew what he was talking about', although Ping was considered to be the better teacher. Ping, who was a tall thin man, could more readily 'impart his knowledge' to the students.²¹ In the end the young women considered the classes given by both men to be 'very interesting'.²²

The training, however, struck problems. The WVS asked Camden Municipal Council for the loan of its new lorry for the driving tests.²³ The council refused. This did not amuse George Sidman. His daughter was a member of the class. He took the council to task in the *Camden News*:

¹⁵ Interview, G.M., Camden, 3 February 1993.

¹⁶ According to some it 'was the best place in town' meaning that it was the best equipped garage in Camden. Interview, G.M., Camden, 3 February 1993.

¹⁷ *Camden News*, 12 October 1939.

¹⁸ *Camden News*, 19 October 1939.

¹⁹ *Camden News*, 12 October 1939.

²⁰ *Camden News*, 19 October 1939.

²¹ Interview, J.C., Narellan, 16 August 1993.

²² *Camden News*, 9 November 1939.

²³ The Council only had one lorry, which they had purchased in May 1939 for £439.

Point blank refusal given to a request on behalf of the Emergency Services organisation by Camden Council when asked to allow the use of council's motor lorry for the purpose of testing lady drivers to qualify for emergency ambulance drivers, takes some explanation to justify itself. Seven young ladies all holders of motor driving licences were to prove their ability to drive a lorry under the supervision of a qualified NRMA officer. A task that would have probably taken a few hours on two afternoons. [sic] Is this to be the future attitude of our aldermen in all cases of national emergency?'²⁴

The refusal by the council illustrated the conservatism of its members and the place of patriarchy in Camden. All the members of the council were men and their refusal to allow the use of the lorry, even in a cause directly related to the war effort, was a reflection of the family patriarchy that these men practised on a daily basis. Intriguingly, six of the eight aldermen had female relatives who were members of the WVS.²⁵ Perhaps the alderman felt that Camden's daughters were overstepping the mark and challenging the division between men's and women's work. The women involved did not complain or protest then, or even years later, when they were interviewed for this thesis. They accepted the *status quo* and did not publicly challenge patriarchy in the community. These women assumed part of their identity from their male relatives.

In the end, Reddon supplied the lorry.²⁶ A former student described Reddon's truck as 'derelict' and reported that as she was taking the test 'the gear stick nearly came out'. The test was both 'very short' and a 'real fizzer': she drove up Camden's main street and out to Camden aerodrome, a total distance of about three miles.²⁷ Eight women eventually qualified for motor transport work driving ambulances, passing the mechanical course, lorry driving test, and the first aid and home nursing certificates.²⁸ There is no record of these women ever putting their hard earned skills to use in the war effort.

²⁴ *Camden News*, 12 October 1939.

²⁵ Alderman H.S. Kelloway, his wife, Alderman E.A. Davies, his wife and daughter, Alderman R.A.C. Adams, his wife and daughter, and other female relatives of Aldermen C.T. Whiteman, K.C. Smart, and H. Doust. *Camden News*, 4 May 1939.

²⁶ Interview, J.C., Narellan, 16 August 1993.

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ *Camden News*, 9 November 1939, 25 July 1940.

British Mobile Canteen Appeal Fund

The WVS's British Mobile Canteen Appeal Fund was a high point in wartime fundraising in Camden. It raised the largest amount of money, in the shortest time, for the entire duration of the war by any Camden voluntary organisation. Given the Camden community's overall effort of wartime volunteering this was indeed a significant achievement.

The initial impetus for the appeal came from the state executive of the WVS. It sought financial support for British mobile canteens in April 1941. The concept of a canteen appeal had originated with a group of Sydney women, one of whom had received a letter from a friend in England who was a member of the British WVS.²⁹

Zoe Crookston took the lead for the canteen appeal in Camden. As a member of the elite it was both assumed and expected that she would take this role. This was typical of wartime volunteering in Camden where it was considered normal for any wartime activity to be first proposed and then legitimised by the elite, and subsequently publicised through the pages of the local press. The female elite then encouraged support for the activity by using the intimacy of Camden's social networks and hierarchies. With appeals this meant imposing a form of fiscal patriotism. Under this regime an individual was expected to donate an appropriate sum of money commensurate with his or her social status. If they did not then their peers would see them as unpatriotic. The WVS executive clearly understood how this process worked because they supported the publication of the names of all donors and their financial contribution to the canteen appeal. Through this process the women of the WVS executive used their social authority to apply pressure on the remainder of the community. This was a subtle, but quite potent form of social coercion.

Crookston's support for the appeal was driven by her altruism, her service commitment to the WVS and her support for all things British. Her proposal for the Camden WVS to conduct the canteen appeal met no opposition at its May meeting.³⁰

²⁹

³⁰

Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 274; ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 22 April 1941.
CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 8 May 1941.

She also sought the support of Camden Municipal Council³¹ via a letter, which later appeared on the front page of the *Camden News*. She wanted the council to open a public subscription as it had done for the Great Britain Civilian War Victims' Relief Fund in September 1940. On that occasion the council had provided administrative support for the appeal and had published the details of all donations in the *Camden News*. On this occasion Crookston hoped that the Council would

favourably consider this application and... assist us to render some help to our kinsmen overseas, who are so courageously standing up to the terrible havoc wrought to life and limb... many of whom are homeless and destitute.³²

Crookston wrote that the WVS would 'make an appeal, both by letter and personal contact, to each householder throughout the Camden district'. In the meantime Hilda Moore, the WVS secretary, had written to the Chief Secretary's Department for permission to conduct the appeal. The Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund approved the application on the condition that the council was accountable for all funds raised.³³ In the end the council agreed to provide office space and staff to administer the public subscription.³⁴ The council's support was quite important as it contributed to the success of the appeal. It allowed the appeal to be officially registered and therefore sanctioned by the state government. And it should also be noted that this was not the only occasion during the war that the council gave its exclusive support to the Camden WVS. Apart from the council, other local sponsors included George Sidman of the *Camden News*, Phillip Fox, owner of the Paramount Theatre, and Ernest Whalan, a dairy farmer, who organised the printing of 900 circular letters.

The Camden WVS launched the appeal in June 1941, with a goal of £500,³⁵ and opened accounts at all Camden banks.³⁶ The WVS filled its appeal goal in only three weeks. Its outstanding success can be attributed to a number of factors. The Camden WVS made effective use of the local media, particularly the *Camden News*.

31. *Camden News*, 15 May 1941.

32. *Camden News*, 12 June 1941.

33. *ibid.*

34. *ibid.*

35. Three WVS centre in New South Wales each raised £500, Camden, Queanbeyan and Wellington, while 25 other WVS centres raised a total of £314/19/-. *Camden News* 16 July 1942; ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 23 May 1941.

36. *Camden News*, 19 June 1941.

The appeal was launched by placing photographs of a mobile canteen and its interior from the British WVS on the front page of the *News*. The canteens were staffed by British WVS volunteers and played an important role in providing Blitz victims and emergency workers with food and relief. The *News* stated that members of the Camden WVS wanted 'the opportunity of relieving the distress of civilians in England, who are in the front line of our battle'. Furthermore, the report maintained that the British WVS was 'doing marvellous work' supplying crews in the London area, and the Australian WVS (that is, New South Wales) wanted the opportunity to provide more canteens 'so that this valuable work [could] be extended as the Blitz [became] more severe'.³⁷ The wide distribution of the *Camden News* resulted in extensive publicity throughout the district for the appeal and George Sidman, the owner of the *News*, gave strong editorial support. Sidman was an ardent imperialist and supported British nationalism at every opportunity through the pages of his newspaper. The role of the *Camden News* in this situation cannot be underestimated, given the intimacy of Camden's social networks. On this occasion the newspaper acted an extension of Camden social networks and Sidman, through his editorial comment, applied pressure on the community to support the appeal. The combination of these tactics, and the social authority of the WVS elite, created a social pressure that many in Camden could not escape.

The canteen appeal became another layer in the multi-dimensional complex of linkages between Camden and Great Britain that were an integral part of the service ideology within British female philanthropy. The canteen appeal highlighted and then roused the cultural links between Camden and Britain ('home'). The Camden WVS linked wartime giving towards the canteen appeal with Camden's Britishness, as had been done in September 1940 by the organisers of the Great Britain Civilian War Victims' Relief Fund, Sibella Macarthur Onslow and Stan Kelloway, the mayor. On that occasion they had successfully raised £702 over eight weeks.³⁸ These efforts stand in stark contrast to the Greek War Relief Fund that the council was asked to co-ordinate in January 1941.³⁹ The aim of the Greek Fund was 'providing comforts and equipment for the members of the Greek Armed Forces'.⁴⁰ Apart from the council donating £5/5/-⁴¹ this appeal disappeared from Camden without a trace.

37. *Camden News*, 19 June 1941

38. *Camden News*, 3 October 1940, 28 November 1940.

39. *Camden News*, 13 January 1941.

40. *Camden Advertiser*, 13 February 1941.

41. Camden Municipal Council [CMC], Minutes, 13 January 1941.

The multi-faceted ties to Britain that the canteen appeal touched were constantly reinforced in Camden by letters, newspaper articles, books, radio broadcasts and the collective memories of individuals. For the Camden community 'home' was characterised by notions of 'familiarity, centrality, origin and beginning'. According to Higman the attachment to place and 'home' is constructed in 'memories and affections through repeated encounters and complex associations'.⁴² This certainly existed in Camden where letters and information from 'home' constantly found their way into the *Camden News*. For example, in January 1941 the *Camden News* published a Blitz photograph from the Department of Information, and an article and letter provided by Joshua and Sarah Scholes of Camden. Sarah Scholes was a member of the WVS. George Sidman, the proprietor of the *Camden News*, waxed lyrical that the letter from the Schole's relatives

thrill[ed] the readers concerning the heroism and magnificent spirit of the British people in their honoured struggle in freeing the world from Nazi tyranny and domination.⁴³

The article described how Sarah Scholes received a photograph taken near her old home in Ashton-under-Lyne showing neighbours' gardens that had been bombed, and how her relatives and friends were on active national service. The *News* reprinted an article from the *Ashton-under-Lyne Reporter* which detailed the exploits of Sarah Scholes brother-in-law, Ernest Livesey (a member of the Home Guard), how he met the King and Queen in 1938 in Ashton, and his service record from the First World War. The *Camden News* also published a weekly 'Bulletin of War News' with occasional photographs of Britain at war. For example, there was a photograph in the *News* from the Department of Information titled 'Business As Usual'. It showed a bombed street scene in a London suburb with a number of people shopping amongst burnt out buildings. The caption read:

'Some German bombs, naturally cause damage, but, being German, it is also natural to suppose that it is usually to non-military objectives. This is a London street after a German "success" and the shoppers and citizens do not appear to be very worried as they continue their business.'⁴⁴

⁴² Higman, *Domestic Service in Australia*, p. 5.

⁴³ *Camden News*, 16 January 1941.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

The photograph, of course, was propaganda designed to show the stoicism of the British people, their stubborn determination to 'soldier on' in adversity and the true spirit of the 'British bulldog'. These, and many other, examples assisted the canteen appeal's success. They directly linked the appeal to familiar sentiments and memories that were central to the origins of Camden's Anglo-centric culture.

As already noted the *Camden News* conveniently recorded, for this researcher at least, all the names and the amount donated by all 765 individual contributors over a four week period towards the appeal.⁴⁵ An analysis of these donations, which ranged from 6d to over £25, reveals some of the recurring patterns of donations to wartime appeals that were characteristic of the service ideology within British philanthropy in Camden, especially the role of class.

One of the features of donating to the canteen appeal by the elite was the role of fiscal patriotism. Under these circumstances the gentry gave large donations and thereby earned themselves kudos and public acclaim. This was typical of philanthropy as practised by these social groups in Britain, Australia and Camden where those with the economic means to give did so, particularly from amongst the upper classes. This was also typical of Camden's pre-war Victorianism where social rank brought with it an expectation of particular duties and obligations, including giving. For the canteen appeal an appropriate level of donation for the elite seemed to be £5. Eleanor Macdonald and each of her daughters, Jessie Macdonald and Lorna Macdonald, of *Kelvin* at Bringelly, each gave £5.⁴⁶ Others who gave £5 included Sibella Macarthur Onslow, Robert and Zoe Crookston, the local doctor, and Robert Adams, a local solicitor.⁴⁷ Some members of the gentry were more generous, such as Francis Faithfull Anderson of *Camelot*, Narellan, who gave £25.⁴⁸

Fiscal patriotism was an essential element to the success of any wartime appeal in Camden. This was especially so for the canteen appeal when it is considered that 72 per cent of all funds raised came from donations of £1 or more, and these donations only constituted 17 per cent of all individual contributions. The importance of support by the elite becomes even more apparent when it is realised that only 15 per

⁴⁵ *Camden News*, 19 June 1941, 26 June 1941, 3 July 1941, 17 July 1941, 31 July 1941.

⁴⁶ *Camden News*, 17 July 1941.

⁴⁷ *Camden News*, 24 July 1941, 3 July 1941.

⁴⁸ *Camden News*, 26 June 1941.

cent of the Camden population made any donation at all to the appeal. As far as other classes were concerned a suitable amount for a middle class family to donate in the name of the male breadwinner seemed to £1/1/-, while the wife could make a smaller donation in her own name. On the other hand, the working and lower middle classes made up the bulk of all donations of less than 10/-. They constituted 76 per cent of all donors to the canteen appeal, but their contributions only amounted to 23 per cent of total donations.

An analysis of the addresses of donors to the canteen appeal shows the spatial differentiation of giving in Camden. Menangle Road and Park Street (see attached map) contained some of the most expensive properties in Camden, as well as the homes of a significant number Camden's power brokers. Menangle Road proceeded along the highest ridge in the town, in front of St John's Church of England, ran out to *Camden Park*, had the best views and was completely flood free. The average level of donations per subscriber from this area was 11/6 per donor. Amongst the donors who lived in Menangle Road were Ernest Britton, chemist, Charles and Emma Doust, dairy farmers, Eliza Furner, whose husband was an ironmonger, Clarence and Beatrice Hennings, jeweller, Benjamin and Maud Hodge, watchmaker, John and Helen Howe, electrician, Alice Sidman, whose husband was the proprietor of the *Camden News*, and Annie Whiteman, storekeeper, all of whom donated over £1.

The WVS effectively used the spatial differentiation of giving in Camden to its advantage. It used collectors from the elite in those areas it was likely to obtain the highest donations. Consequently Zoe Crookston, who collected in John Street, had the highest per capita donation for all collectors who worked for the WVS during the appeal at £1/12/6 per subscriber. Amongst the donors who lived in John Street were some of those who gave the highest donations including Robert and Zoe Crookston, surgeon, £5/-/-, Phillip Fox, picture proprietor, £2/2/-, Muriel Whiteman, £2/2/- and Edith Whiteman, £2/2/-. The next most successful collector was Katie Downes, the wife of Rupert Downes of *Aston*, a member of the local gentry. She collected £1/10/6 per subscriber at Brownlow Hill and Theresa Park.

In contrast, wage earners from the lower middle and working classes, who gave smaller donations to the canteen appeal, were concentrated in the cheaper housing

areas along the flood plain in the lower parts of the town. These streets were subject to regular flooding. These areas recorded the lowest donations per subscriber and reflected their limited financial means. One such collection area of Camden for the appeal was Mitchell, Exeter and Elizabeth streets, which had a concentration of families whose breadwinners were mainly labourers, and who donated 5/6 per subscriber. Other working class areas were Narellan and Elderslie. Here there were significant numbers of families with labourers as the breadwinner, and the amounts donated per subscriber were 3/6 and 4/6 respectively. Orangeville and Werombi, again where rural labouring families predominated, donated 3/6 and 5/- respectively.

The canteen appeal also showed, not surprisingly, that the characteristics of Camden's religious and ethnic divisions found their way into wartime fundraising. As already noted, Camden's female voluntary organisations were predominantly Protestant and drawn from the elite and upper middle classes (see Chapter Four). So it was no surprise to find that for donations over £1 over 90 per cent came from Protestant individuals, while only 3 per cent came from Catholic members of the community. Despite this, there were some significant individual donations from the Catholic community. They included Phillip Fox (formerly Fuchs), the proprietor of the Paramount Picture Theatre, who gave £2/2/-, Reverend. Mother Mathias, £1/1/-, and Frederick Von Frankenberg, a farmer, £5/5/-.⁴⁹ Camden's Catholics did not occupy positions of social power within the community and with the possible exception of the Reverend Mother, none of the three donors were of the Catholicism traditionally associated with Australian Catholicism, Irish Catholicism. When the contributions by Camden Catholics are examined overall, they were under-represented among the donors. Making up 27 per cent of the local population, they accounted for 17 per cent of all funds raised. Over 75 per cent of their donations were less than 5/-.⁵⁰ Even accepting that most of Camden's Catholics had relatively low incomes, it is also likely that the marginalisation of Irish Australian Catholics in Camden and the collective memories of Ireland's troubles also played a part.

Apart from the Camden Catholic community, others on the fringe of the Camden community felt it appropriate to give substantial donations to the canteen appeal including two Chinese market gardeners, Yee Lee (who donated £2/2/-) and Hop

⁴⁹ *Camden News*, 26 June 1941, 3 July 1941; Campton, 'P Fuchs - P Fox and Son', (CHS); Fox, who came from Isburn in Germany, had changed his name from Fuchs during the First World War.

⁵⁰ Roman Catholics in the Camden district were principally small freeholders, leaseholders and the local working class. Willis, *War and Community*, p. 31.

Chong (who donated £4/-/-).⁵¹ They may have had little interest in a European war but their donations reflected a desire to be inclusive with the remainder of the community. The Camden Chinese were 'highly respected' members of the local community, as they were in other country towns in Australia,⁵² although their history is largely invisible. Assimilationist pressures meant that they were included with the community on some occasions, yet ironically ensured that at other times they were treated as 'outsiders'. The Camden Chinese did maintain a long tradition established by Chinese Australians. The Chinese were always found on the subscription lists for causes that ranged from local relief and hospital funds to the money needed to fight Australia's wars.⁵³

Amongst the Protestant contributors one pattern of giving that stands out is that of Camden's Non-conformist families. For example, Stuckey Bros, a local Methodist baker, gave £6/5/-, which was above the level of donation given by some of the gentry. The Whiteman family, another Methodist family who owned a number of small retail businesses, gave £11/5/- to the appeal.⁵⁴ Other donations from Methodist families in the district, included those of the Smart family, dairy farmers, £2/1/-, Furners, local business people, £8, Dunks, local businessmen, £8/3/-, the Boardmans, local businessmen and dairy farmers, £3/3/-, the Moores, dairy farmers, £6, and N Hutchinson, a dairy farmer, £5/-/-.⁵⁵

The canteen appeal also provides an insight into the importance of fiscal patriotism to the viability of small businesses in wartime Camden. Small family businesses like that of the Stuckeys, Furners and Dunks were vulnerable to social pressures that were part of the intimacy created by rural life. Local business people could be particularly susceptible to any type of public campaign mounted against them. Any concerted effort by any group within the Camden community to boycott a local business could have dire consequences for their survival and their presence in the town.⁵⁶ Hence these businesses tended to be amongst the highest donors to the appeal.

⁵¹ *Camden News*, 31 July 1941.

Nixon, *The Chinese Community of Camden*, p. 9; Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, particularly Chapter Four, pp. 61-82.

⁵³ Richard Nixon, *The First Chinese in Camden*, *District Reporter*, 30 April 1999; Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, p. 70.

⁵⁴ *Camden News*, 3 July 1941, 24 July 1941, 31 July 1941.

⁵⁵ *Camden News*, 3 July 1941, 17 July 1941, 24 July 1941, 31 July 1941. A number of these families lived along Menangle Road (Whitemans, Furners and Dousts).

⁵⁶ A.B., a Camden barber, claimed that he almost 'went broke' in 1943 when he supported a

The Camden WVS collected a total of £513 for the canteen appeal: the total raised throughout the Commonwealth was £30,000. The only other WVS centres to achieve the target of £500 were Wellington and Queanbeyan.⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that the British WVS stated that only £25,000 was sent to England.⁵⁸ The *Camden News* reported that the funds were remitted to London 'almost immediately', and that the local effort was recognised by a plate with an inscription, fixed to a canteen. The local organiser of the canteen appeal, the town clerk Kenneth Wilson, stated in his report that he felt his 'deep appreciation of the unflagging interest, assistance and support so readily and gladly given throughout the campaign' by the women of the Camden WVS. Wilson also expressed 'grateful thanks and appreciation to all the subscribers who [had] so generously supported this most worthy and humanitarian objective'.⁵⁹ Correspondence from Iris Capell, the vice-president of the British WVS, acknowledged the donations in the *Camden News*. She stated that she felt a 'deep appreciation of the efforts' of the New South Wales Committee. She stated that twenty-eight canteens were ordered, and requested that any surplus funds be used to repair bomb-damaged canteens and purchase complementary units, such as vans and water trailers. In her report in the *Camden News* she stated that 'the result [had] been to present the bombed areas with a well-balanced fleet of vehicles for the relief of bombed victims'.⁶⁰

Apart from the factors discussed, the overall success of the canteen appeal owed much to its critical timing and the sense of immediacy that this created in the Camden community. The Great Britain Civilian War Victims' Relief Fund, for instance, was opened as the Blitz began, but raised less than the canteen appeal on a weekly basis. Camden's citizens were fully aware of the havoc wrought by the Luftwaffe by the time the canteen appeal was launched. The canteen appeal was also held before the Japanese entered the war. After December 1941 the attention of the Camden WVS, and the Camden community, shifted away from Camden's British connections and concentrated on the perceived threat of a Japanese invasion. In June

referendum for Sunday sport in Camden. The conservative element within the Camden community deserted him, particularly the Methodists. Interview, A.B., Camden, 19 November 1993.

⁵⁷ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 23 May 1941.

⁵⁸ Graves, *Women in Green*, p. 274.

⁵⁹ *Camden News*, 17 July 1941.

⁶⁰ *Camden News*, 31 July 1941.

1941, all the elements were in favour of the WVS and the women were therefore able to galvanise the community to support the appeal.

The WVS, the Red Cross and the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

The cooperation, as well as the social linkages and relationships, between the Camden WVS and the Red Cross aided the wartime success of the WVS. Apart from overlapping membership and the influence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, the basis for the inter-organisational co-operation between the Camden WVS and Red Cross was to be found in the history and strength of the Red Cross in Camden. The establishment of the Camden branch of the British Red Cross in 1914 was a response by those within Camden female philanthropy to support 'King and Country', which they had done from the time of the Boer War. Membership of the Red Cross was an expression by Camden's Protestant gentry and upper middle class women of a strong desire to serve the community through a patriotic sense of nationalism. The Red Cross had military affiliations, a strong sense of British nationalism, a strong service ethic, a high social status, patriotic jingoism, centralised control, and branches throughout the Camden district, which provided sound training for participation in the WVS. In addition the establishment of each new women's organisation in Camden after 1900 incrementally increased the social authority and 'participation in public affairs'⁶¹ of Camden women, while at the same time strengthening the service ideology within the town's female philanthropy. In addition the demeanour and public profile of Camden women gave them the ability to develop 'parallel paths' within Camden's female philanthropy, while at the same time retaining their femininity. By the outbreak of war in 1939 these women had constructed 'public personas' for themselves and exercised considerable social authority within the community. They expressed this through their participation in the activities of the WVS.

Given this history it was no surprise that the WVS co-operated with Camden Red Cross and re-formed the Camden VAD. In the process the joint venture created the most successful training exercise undertaken by the Camden WVS, and the most successful co-operative venture between the two organisations. The re-forming of

^{61.} Joy Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums, Women's Mobilisation, 1914-1939' in Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia*, p. 365.

the VAD vindicated the efforts of Camden's gentry and upper-middle class women in socialising Camden's young women in the 'ideals of service', while at the same time acknowledging the influence of modernity. Under the leadership of Macarthur Onslow, Camden's female elite had sponsored the education of Camden's lower middle and working class girls in the 'ideals of service' through the Junior Red Cross and Girl Guides. The Junior Red Cross had been established in local schools after 1918, and trained girls in self-reliance, thrift, 'unselfishness', loyalty, hygiene, citizenship, patriotism and imperial motherhood.⁶² The Girl Guides, which were established in Camden in 1924, stressed the traditional feminine skills of care and domestic work. The Guides followed the views of Olave Baden-Powell, who acknowledged 'a separate sphere for women and the need for training for the unique responsibility of motherhood, [but] also incorporated many of the "male" activities' involving physical fitness and outdoor life, and an 'emphasis on the frontier life'. These ideals were compatible with Camden's rural ideology, while at the same time providing a degree of independence and effective training for wartime volunteering, within the framework represented by the 'ideals of liberal imperialism'.⁶³ These ideals appeared in the VAD.

The original Camden VAD was formed in 1917 by the Camden Red Cross, but disbanded in 1924 when there was a general downturn in VA numbers.⁶⁴ The Camden voluntary aids (VAs) had undertaken voluntary service at *Waley*, the Red Cross convalescent home for returned servicemen at *Mowbray Park*, Picton.⁶⁵ The origins and development of the VAD movement were part of the Red Cross movement in Great Britain. The first branches were established in New South Wales in 1914 at the same time as the Red Cross.⁶⁶ Considering the VAD were part of the Red Cross movement in Australia, it comes as no surprise that the membership of the detachments developed a strong tradition that matched the ethos and structure of the Red Cross: 'service', 'patriotism', 'training', 'character' development and 'friendship'⁶⁷ were coupled with the Victorian construction of femininity.

⁶² Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 164-168.

⁶³ Allen Warren, 'Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and An Imperial Ideal, 1900-40' in Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, pp. 244-246; J.S. Bratton, 'British Imperialism and the Reproduction of Femininity in Girl's Fiction, 1900-1930' in Richards, *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature*, pp. 206-207.

⁶⁴ Australian Red Cross Society, New South Wales Division [ARCS NSW], *Annual Report 1918-1919*, pp. 51, 90, *Annual Reports 1923-24*, p. 26; CHS, Camden Red Cross, Minutes, 28 October 1919;

⁶⁵ CHS, Camden Red Cross, Minutes, 1915-1924.

⁶⁶ Goodman, *Volunteer Aid Detachments*, p. 14.

⁶⁷ The view of Lady Galleghan on the contribution of the VA to the Second World War. Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs*, p. xvi.

Although the detachment in Camden may have closed, the VAD movement had continued elsewhere. In 1926 it received official recognition from the Australian military authorities⁶⁸, and after a general restructuring in 1936, its service aims were set out as follows:

- (1) The creation of a training body of women who will be ready to assist in the case of sickness or accident, and prepared in the event of any National disaster, calamity or need.
- (2) To supplement training by rendering service in Red Cross activities, or in public hospitals, as may be required.⁶⁹

In 1939, *The Red Cross Record* set out the benefits of the VADs and the women it sought to attract,

The service of the Voluntary Aid Detachments is one which makes a strong human appeal, particularly to young women, who are often anxious to have some definite work to take up for the benefit of others. It is a practical service, yet it has within it that larger and higher inspiration that never fails to awaken its own whole-hearted and devoted response to the call of the Red Cross.⁷⁰

After prompting from the state level,⁷¹ the Camden VAD was re-formed in September 1939 at a public meeting convened by the Red Cross, presided over by Sibella Macarthur Onslow, and attended by three WVS representatives, Zoe Crookston, Doris Larkin and Grace Moore, all members of the Camden gentry. Moore was elected commandant, and Crookston's daughter, Jacqueline, elected

⁶⁸. Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs*, p. 60.
⁶⁹. ARCS NSW, *Annual Report 1936-37*, p. 20.
⁷⁰. *The Red Cross Record*, 1 February 1939, p. 4.

⁷¹. Initially the Camden Red Cross became interested in reforming the detachment in 1938 after an address at the annual general meeting by Ruby Storey, MBE, who was a director of the Junior Red Cross in New South Wales. It was not until December 1938 that the Camden Red Cross resolved to establish a VAD, which they did in conjunction with in the WVS in May 1939. CHS, Camden Red Cross, Minutes, 6 December 1938, 14 February 1939; *Camden News* 1 September 1938, 1 June 1939. According to the WVS pamphlet 'Women SOS' the WVS was 'linked with the State Joint Council of VA Detachments' in January 1939 to facilitate the training of young women in first aid and home nursing. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42291, 39/3/110, Pamphlet, 'SOS Women', Women's Voluntary Services, January 1939.

quartermaster.⁷² Other notable members of the Camden detachment were Faith Macarthur Onslow, the niece of Sibella Macarthur Onslow and Ruth and Betty Sidman, the daughters of George Sidman, the owner of the *Camden News*. The remainder of VAD membership were the daughters of local businessmen, professionals and dairyfarmers. Twenty-one out of the twenty-two women present were single and only nine were over twenty-one years of age.⁷³ These young women from the Camden elite were part of Saunders and Bolton's 'leisured upper and middle classes', who they argue, 'had the time to devote to unpaid labour and the money to purchase uniforms and badges'.⁷⁴ This is true, but these young women were also influenced by the example set by their female relatives and their social authority, demeanour and involvement in public affairs in Camden, while at the same time retaining their own interpretation of Victorian femininity and the new ideas of modernity.

In 1939 each VA had to be at least sixteen years old, wear a uniform, attend parades and inspections, and gain first aid and home nursing certificates within six months of enrolment.⁷⁵ For the Camden VAs drill meetings were held on Monday nights in the agriculture hall, and instruction was given by Lieutenant MI Wheatley and Sergeant-Major O'Shea of the Eastern Command Training School, *Studley Park*, Narellan. The detachment practised their marching around Camden's streets, especially when they were preparing to take part in Sydney parades.⁷⁶ The Camden VAD attended marches in Sydney on 16 March 1940, 11 May 1940 and the United Anzac Service on 17 April 1941. To cope with women who had domestic commitments, detachments were divided into immobile (home-service) and mobile.⁷⁷ In 1940 all members of the Camden VAD were classified as immobile.⁷⁸

The Camden VAD was another step in the evolution of Camden's female philanthropy, and illustrated that despite Camden's conservatism, there was an underlying dynamism to Camden's social structure. The women of the WVS and Red Cross recognised their daughters' desires, and through the VAD provided an

⁷² *Camden News*, 7 September 1939.

⁷³ *Camden News*, 26 October 1939; Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 363-364.

⁷⁴ Saunders Kay and Geoffrey Bolton, 'Girdled For War, Women's Mobilisations in World War Two' in Saunders & Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia*, p. 378.

⁷⁵ *The Red Cross Record*, 1 February 1939, p. 4; ARCS NSW, *Annual Report 1937-38*, p. 22.

⁷⁶ *Camden News*, 8 February 1940, 15 February 1940, 21 March 1940, 2 April 1940; Interview, E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993;

⁷⁷ *The Red Cross Record*, 1 February 1939, p. 4.

⁷⁸ Oppenheimer, *Red Cross VAs*, p. 181.

environment that was conducive to the fulfilment of their aspirations. The Camden VAs combined their independence and service commitment, and expressed it in a range of voluntary activities, which illustrated their duty, self-sacrifice and patriotism. For instance, Camden VAs volunteered for nursing orderly duties at Camden hospital, assisted with local immunisation programmes and undertook duty at Camden ambulance station. A number volunteered for Camden's National Emergency Services in 1942 and assisted with fundraising for the Red Cross and WVS. Some of these activities revealed the change in attitudes from their mother's generation. This particularly applied to fraternisation with military personnel at local military establishments, especially the RAAF. For example, VAs from Camden and Campbelltown undertook duties at the RAAF Station Sick Quarters at Camden Aerodrome, where they volunteered their time, initially with the RAAF Central Flying School in May 1942, and then for another three years to October 1945, with the various squadrons that were stationed at the Base.⁷⁹ The duties of the VAs included sterilising equipment, making up beds, general duties as nursing orderlies, washing up and making the officers cups of tea. One VA went on duty each day, while two attended every alternate weekend, supplementing the work of the medical orderlies. The VAs enjoyed their time at the RAAF Station amongst the young airmen, who were reportedly well behaved,⁸⁰ and one airman was prompted to write:

On behalf of myself and staff of nursing orderlies, indeed on behalf of the entire personnel of CFS [Central Flying School], Camden, (and particularly on behalf of those who were patients in the Station Sick Quarters), may I offer our sincere thanks and gratitude to yourself and members of your detachment for the many kind deeds performed so unstintingly and graciously for men of the CFS, Camden.

We admire the spirit in which you so willingly and voluntarily perform any task, which fell to your hands. We are all deeply appreciative of the way you and your VA tended us: nursing when we were ill, feeding when we were hungry, clothing when we were dirty; in fact, mothering us in a thousand and one circumstances.

We shall not forget!

Our hope is that you will continue to care in similar spirit for our Allies across the Pacific, who may find themselves stationed near you: and that our

⁷⁹. *Camden News*, 29 August 1946.

⁸⁰. Interviews: R.B., Camden, 14 March 1995; E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993; B.K., Camden, 5 May 1993.

gratitude for your services will enrich you in spirit, and spur you to continue in these services.

Yours in eternal gratitude,

LL Edwards, F/Lt (Formerly Medical Officer of CFS, Camden).

7th May, 1942⁸¹

In addition to these duties, the Camden VAs attended *Gilbulla*, the Red Cross rehabilitation centre for nerve cases for returned servicemen at Menangle. The VAs entertained the servicemen on Sunday afternoons, after being dropped off by Joan Hawkey, a VA, in her car.⁸² Wartime volunteering for the VAs involved a degree of allowable flirting with these 'outsiders' that at any other time would have been frowned upon by the local community. As well membership of the Camden VAD provided an opportunity for some VAs to serve outside the local area, a position that was denied to many other local women. Five Camden VAs joined the Australian Army Medical Women's Service after 1942, including Jacqueline Crookston,⁸³ and after the war two VAs became paid nursing staff at Camden hospital.⁸⁴ This type of experience was not unique to Camden. After the Temora VAD was formed in 1940 its members volunteered for duty at the RAAF hospital at No 10 Elementary Flying Training School. Three VAs were rostered on each day and were picked up each day by RAAF tender. In addition, 'there was a standing invitation to the VAs to attend any of the entertainment put on by either the Airmen or Officers and this was sometimes accepted [sic]'.⁸⁵ Similarly members of the Newcastle Central VAD volunteered for duty at Rutherford Military Camp Hospital, Broughton Military Sick Bay, the Williamstown RAAF Base Hospital, New Lambton Sick Bay and at the Royal Newcastle Hospital, Waratah Mater Misericordiae Hospital and the Infectious Disease Hospital at Waratah. Australian Army Medical Women's Service From amongst the membership ten aids joined the AAMWS, five joined the Australian Women's Army Service and five enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force.⁸⁶

⁸¹ The letter was sent to Miss C.M. Sedgwick, VAD Commandant, of Campbelltown and published in the *Camden News* 14 May 1942. Miss Sedgwick was the daughter of the Chairman of the Camden District Hospital Board, Mr F.J. (Mate) Sedgwick. Vernon, *Fitzpatrick and Sedgwick Families*, pp. 6-7.

⁸² *Camden News*, 29 August 1946.

⁸³ *Camden News*, 21 September 1939, 22 August 1940, 26 September 1940, 14 May 1942, 27 July 1942, 31 August 1944, 1 February 1945. *Camden Advertiser*, 2 July 1942. Interviews, R.B., Camden, 14 March 1995; B.K. and E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993; A.R., Camden, 6 March 1995; E.B., Camden, 11 March 1995.

⁸⁴ Interview, B.K. and E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993.

⁸⁵ Maslin, *Wings Over Temora*, pp.57-59.

⁸⁶ Davis, Newcastle Central Detachment, pp. 7-9, 14.

All Camden VAs were unpaid and were motivated by a strong sense of patriotism, particularly to Great Britain. One VA recalls that she volunteered because,

We wanted to do something for King and Country, even though in those days Europe seemed so far away, but England was often referred to as 'home'.⁸⁷

They 'just wanted to help' and according to one VA 'it just seemed the automatic thing to do' at the time. After gaining their first aid and home nursing certificates two Camden VAs rode their bicycles seven miles into Camden to volunteer their time at Camden hospital to 'wash walls, clean up the pan room, carry pans to patients and make beds'. Camden VAs have claimed that they took their work seriously, they enjoyed it and did not seek the limelight. The Detachment was not a 'social group' and the VAs considered that their efforts were valuable, patriotic and had a definite purpose.⁸⁸

VAs had to possess a first aid and home nursing certificate, and training courses in Camden in both subjects were organised by the WVS, the Red Cross, and later the NES. In Camden these courses not only attracted VAs, but also members of the WVS and the general public. The initial first aid course was started by Mary McIntosh of the Red Cross, with a series of six evening lectures given by Robert Crookston at his surgery. Crookston used the manual from the British Red Cross Society, which cost 3/6d. James Jefferis, another local doctor, examined the course in late April 1939. Jefferis subsequently gave a course of six home nursing lectures at the Camden town hall. Mabel Norman, the matron of Camden hospital, gave the practical nursing demonstrations to groups of four girls on a Friday afternoon at the hospital.⁸⁹ The first aid course finished in May and 62 per cent of the successful students were either members of the WVS, or VAD.⁹⁰ A home nursing course was organised in August 1940, and 76 per cent of the students were either members of the WVS, or had female relatives in the WVS.⁹¹ A separate series of first aid lecture started in September in conjunction with the motor maintenance and ambulance

⁸⁷ Letter, F.L.W. (Oxfordshire, United Kingdom) to I.C.W., 17 March 2002.
⁸⁸ Interviews: B.K., Camden, 5 May 1993; E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993; E.B., Camden, 11 March 1995.

⁸⁹ *Camden News*, 16 February 1939, 2 March 1939, 20 April 1939, 27 April 1939, 1 June 1939, 14 September 1939, 9 November 1939.

⁹⁰ CHS, Camden Red Cross, Minutes, 14 February 1939; *Camden News*, 22 February 1939.

⁹¹ *Camden News*, 1 August 1940.

driving course. The lectures were held at 8:00pm at the town hall and were given by James Jefferis.⁹² Twenty-five students attended the first lecture, and eventually thirty-one passed the examination, four of who were men.⁹³ Among the women who undertook the course, ten were members of the VAD, six were members of the WVS, nine were members of the Camden Red Cross, five were married and the remainder single. Three of the group were members of the WVS, VAD and Red Cross, while six belonged to at least two of the organisations. These women were either members of the female clique, such as Grace Moore, or relatives of this group, like Jacqueline Crookston.

The first aid courses illustrated how Camden's social structure was unaffected by the war, particularly local sectarianism. The course excluded poorer Catholic women in the town and those located in the remoter villages in the western part of the region. This sectarianism had been evident in the area from the earliest days of European settlement, and extended into other areas of Camden life such as employment, politics and residential location. Carey described the Catholic and Protestant divisions in Australia as 'tribalism', and this was certainly the situation in Camden where each community had a distinct and separate 'identity'.⁹⁴ Sectarianism was not restricted to the Camden WVS and pervaded most parts of Camden wartime voluntary activities, especially amongst women's organisations. There was no direct form of discrimination, but the social authority and subtle forms of intimidation practised by the female clique, all of whom were Protestant, ensured that lower class Catholic women did not join these organisations. Researchers⁹⁵ have partly shown how sectarianism has worked in Australia but its examination is not often attempted in rural communities.⁹⁶ Such a study is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis.

Overall there was a close relationship between the Camden WVS, the VAD and the Camden Red Cross, which was typical of the WVS and its relationship with the

⁹². *Camden News*, 21 September 1939.

⁹³. *Camden News*, 14 September 1939, 5 October 1939, 18 January 1940. This policy was in line with the decision by the New South Wales Division of the Australian Red Cross Society agreeing with the National Emergency Services, in April, 1939, to co-ordinate its services with the New South Wales Government thus avoiding duplication with First Aid Courses. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 April 1939.

⁹⁴. Carey, *Believing in Australia*, p. 93.

⁹⁵. For instance, Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia*; Carey, *Believing in Australia*; Judd & Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*; Campion, *Australian Catholics*.

⁹⁶. One exception is McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War*, Chapter Nine, *Doing Their Share?* pp. 149-160.

remainder of the community. The common sense of purpose and the voluntary service ethos underpinning the VAD showed how closely the VAD reflected the WVS. The Camden VAD attracted younger women than either the WVS, or Red Cross, and therefore did not directly compete for members with either organisation. Despite this there were still membership links between the Camden WVS and VAD either at an individual level or through family. Between 1939 and 1945 the Camden VAD had a membership of thirty-eight women, of whom 16 per cent were members of the WVS. A further 29 per cent either had their mother, or another female relative, as members of the WVS. One example of this, were the Moore sisters. Hilda Moore was the initial contact person for the VAD, she was a member of the WVS and secretary of Camden Red Cross, while her sister, Grace, as noted earlier, was the VAD commandant and was also the secretary of the Camden WVS.⁹⁷

The WVS-Red Cross Sewing Party

Another small, although not insignificant joint effort between the Camden WVS and the Camden Red Cross was the weekly sewing party. It represented the traditional view of 'women's war work' that Camden women had undertaken during the Boer and the First World Wars. On these occasions local women had been 'eager to serve the cause of the Empire'⁹⁸ by volunteering thousands of hours to sew for the Red Cross. This was an activity these women understood and were comfortable with, and one that they now carried into the Second World War.

In January 1942, the Camden Red Cross received a request from Brigadier Egan, the commanding officer of Narellan Military Camp, for a weekly sewing party to attend the camp to mend soldiers' uniforms. The Red Cross resolved to approach the WVS to organise the arrangements.⁹⁹ A number of women from both organisations met outside the Camden town hall at 1.45pm on a Wednesday afternoon and were provided with military transport to the camp.¹⁰⁰ The women in the sewing party were under the supervision of the camp welfare officer (Major Wheat), and met at the

⁹⁷ Willis, *War and Community*, Appendices 74-75.

⁹⁸ Damousi, Joy, 'Marching to Different Drums, Women's Mobilisation, 1914-1939' in Saunders and Evans, *Gender Relations in Australia*, p. 353.

⁹⁹ CHS, Camden Red Cross, Minutes, 6 January 1942.

¹⁰⁰ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 8 January 1942.

Church of England National Emergency Fund Hut.¹⁰¹ The sewing party also undertook sewing for men at the Eastern Command Training School at *Studley Park*, Narellan, and they provided surgical dressings for the 11th Casualty Clearing Station at the agricultural hall at Camden showground.¹⁰² In 1943 volunteers from the Bringelly-Rossmore branch of the Red Cross, who did sewing and mending for the camp hospital, joined the sewing party.¹⁰³ The sewing party ran parallel with a sewing group that had been started by the Camden CWA Younger Set in 1940 (which is discussed in Chapter Seven).

By January 1945 the sewing party had been operating for three years, and had missed only one Wednesday. In the period from 1 April 1943 to 17 January 1945 the women had worked on over 2000 articles of clothing. In their weekly visit the women repaired, altered and pressed clothing, 'relieving the men of trying to use the needle and cotton or darning socks'.¹⁰⁴ By December 1945, when the WVS closed down, these women had made over 200 visits to the Narellan Camp, which amounted to a total effort of over 5000 hours.¹⁰⁵ The *Camden News* claimed that the effort by these women was 'a wonderful voluntary effort, and no wonder the men [were] desirous of expressing their appreciation'.¹⁰⁶ Zoe Crookston felt that 'this [was] one of the most practical ways that the soldier away from his home can be helped' and 'there [was] no doubt about his appreciation'.¹⁰⁷ According to Crookston the volunteers were providing 'faithful service in [a] very special way for servicemen away from their own people'.¹⁰⁸ Hilda Moore, Camden Red Cross secretary, maintained that the women did 'valuable work for the men' at the camp.¹⁰⁹ Interestingly neither the WVS nor Red Cross officially acknowledged that this was a joint venture in any of their annual reports, and neither Macarthur Onslow, Crookston, Moore nor any other members of Camden's female elite participated in these activities.

¹⁰¹ *Camden News*, 25 January 1945.

¹⁰² *Camden News*, 16 July 1942.

¹⁰³ *Camden News*, 22 July 1943.

¹⁰⁴ *Camden News*, 25 January 1945.

¹⁰⁵ Calculation: 200 visits x 5 women per visit x 5 hours work per visit = 5000 hours.

¹⁰⁶ *Camden News*, 25 January 1945.

¹⁰⁷ *Camden News*, 5 August 1943.

¹⁰⁸ *Camden News*, 10 August 1944.

¹⁰⁹ *Camden News*, 16 September 1943.

The sewing party consisted of seven women from the Camden WVS and five women from the Camden Red Cross.¹¹⁰ Most of these women were members of Camden's lower-middle and working classes. Only two of the women from the WVS were members of the Red Cross and none of the women from the Red Cross were members of the WVS. None of the women held any executive positions on the WVS executive, although Margaret Pattison and Irene Huthnance were members of the WVS general committee. As well, Huthnance played a significant role in the Camden salvage effort, which is examined in Chapter Ten. Alice Poole was a Red Cross volunteer. Her husband was a coachbuilder, she lived in Menangle Road, was a member of the Red Cross general committee and later became a vice-president. Mary Sparks was the daughter of a local blacksmith, married a soldier who did his training at Narellan military camp in 1941, and was a member of the roster committee for the Hospitality Centre, which is examined in Chapter Nine. Spark's voluntarism may well have reflected a wish on her part that her husband would receive similar benefits when he was stationed at other military camps. Overall the 'agency and entitlement' of these women meant that they provided a service to 'the boys' in the belief that they were being patriotic and helping the war effort.

The members of the sewing party showed that volunteering was a service, which was characterised by perseverance, a sense of duty and a high degree of personal sacrifice, with little or no recognition. All were characteristic of the women's voluntary service ideology. They were typical of the many Camden women who were not members of the local elite: they volunteered for wartime service and expected little public recognition for their effort. Their altruism and stoicism supported the *status quo*, a reflection of their rural conservatism. But the activities of these women also illustrated that, for them, there was a direct link between volunteering, domestic skills and patriotism.

The absence of the elite from general sewing duties indicates that there was a stratification of different types of volunteering according to class in wartime Camden, as mentioned earlier. This was similar to WVS activities in Great Britain. Sewing and knitting that was organised on a group basis, such as the sewing party,

^{110.} The women from the Camden WVS were Lillian Driscoll, Annie Dickinson, Irene Huthnance, Eleanor Macdonald, Harriett Outterside and Margaret Pattison. *Camden News*, 16 July 1943. Mrs L.G. Moreing. *Camden News*, 25 January 1945. The women from the Camden Red Cross were Alice Poole, Mary Sparks, Mary Clissold and her sister D. Clissold, and D. Rogers. *Camden News*, 16 September 1943.

was generally the domain of lower class women. As a general rule it was rare to see female members of the Camden elite volunteering for this type of broad based activity. This also meant that women who undertook this type of sewing and knitting received less public acknowledgment than women from the elite who organised them. Consequently the sewing party was not a high status project and lacked the high public profile of the Mobile Canteen Fund Appeal. It was uncommon for individual women in the sewing party to be acknowledged in either the minutes of the Red Cross or WVS, or the local newspapers. They received a collective kudos that was ascribed to the entire group of women. These principles extended to the weekly Red Cross sewing meetings where the female volunteers received no public recognition other than the personal satisfaction of a job 'well done'. In contrast the organisers were personally identified on a number of occasions.¹¹¹ The Red Cross sewing meetings were held on Tuesday afternoons, and no doubt, some of the women who regularly attended these would have doubled up again on the Wednesday for the sewing party to Narellan as well.¹¹² Interestingly, afternoon teas at the Red Cross sewing meetings were provided by women from the WVS at the cost of 3d.¹¹³ This provided a hint of the differential social status of the two organisations, with the members of the WVS waiting on the members of the Red Cross.

There were subtle differences in the type of sewing, knitting and cooking activities that were undertaken by different classes groupings in Camden. These principles were also applied to the sweets, crafts and cakes that were provided for, and sold at street stalls conducted by the WVS, the Red Cross and similar organisations during the war.

The WVS and the Junior Red Cross

A smaller contribution to the WVS's war effort came from the Junior Red Cross at the Camden Public School. It provided the WVS with hand-knitted soldier comforts that were made by the senior girls, under the direction of their teacher Helen

^{111.} *Camden News*, 22 August 1940.

^{112.} Over eighty women regularly attended the weekly Red Cross sewing meetings and in total these sewers manufactured over 46,000 articles constituting over 90,000 hours of effort. Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 112-114.

^{113.} *Camden Advertiser*, 1 February 1940; CHS, Camden Red Cross, Minutes, 5 February 1940.

Brancker. Brancker encouraged the local girls to join the Junior Red Cross Circle, which she ran at the school between 1938 and 1939. Between 1939 and 1942 the Circle was under the leadership of another female teacher, Alice Ford. The service objectives of the Junior Red Cross followed those of its senior organisation. They aimed at

the encouragement among our young people of a spirit of voluntary service and self-denial... [and]... the training in efficiency which will be of assistance in war or times of great natural disaster.¹¹⁴

These objects were part of informal curriculum that involved the education of Camden's girls in the 'ideals of service' and familial socialisation, which was all part of their gender role in Camden.¹¹⁵ This effort made a small contribution to the soldier comforts programme of the Camden WVS, which is examined in greater detail in Chapter Six. These types of activities were not isolated to Camden. In Quirindi there were joint activities between the Junior Red Cross and the Quirindi WVS. Shirley Buckley of Quipolly recalls that the girls at her small primary school 'knitted scarves, khaki for the soldiers and navy blue for the airmen and sailors'.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The WVS activities examined in the chapter have shown that the voluntary service ideology, which was part of British female philanthropy, had a number of levels which related to class and status, with each having its own set of characteristics, ranging from the organisational role of the elite to the women from the working class who sewed. The service ideology was also divided on religious lines between Protestant and Catholic, and donating was spatially differentiated according to address. Apart from its British origins, the service ideology borrowed a number of traditions in female philanthropy that had developed in Camden from the time of the Boer War.

¹¹⁴ *Junior Red Cross Record*, 14 February 1922, 8; Mrs McKinnon, 'A Plea For the Junior Red Cross Society', *Education Gazette*, 1 March 1926, p. 23.

¹¹⁵ For education of girls in the 'ideals of service' see Tinkler, 'At Your Service', pp. 353-4; This role for the girls was part of the informal curriculum examined in Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 164-171; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, pp. 6-8, 26-27.

¹¹⁶ Durrant, *Quirindi*, pp. 17-18.

The class divisions within the activities of the WVS meant that generally speaking the elite organised appeals, fundraising and other activities. Their social authority allowed them to extract large amounts of money from the community, which were publicised in the local press. On the other hand, lower class women undertook more mundane tasks, like sewing and repairing clothes, that was organised on a group basis and received little or no acknowledgment for their effort. Camden's female philanthropy had always reflected the community's social divisions. They were an integral part of the town's rural ideology and the war did not change this situation.

Camden's Catholic women only participated in WVS activities in small numbers. They were not encouraged to join Camden's female voluntary organisations by the Protestant women who ran them. Catholic women were also disadvantaged by their lack of education, status, prestige and income. The exclusiveness of Camden's female organisations meant that the Catholic community mostly supported Catholic patriotic organisations, like the Catholic United Services Auxiliary.

With the outstanding exception of the VAD, most of the enthusiastic training effort of the Camden WVS for air raid precautions, ambulance driving and motor maintenance was largely in vain. Camden's conservatism, patriarchy and desire to maintain the status quo effectively restricted the type of wartime volunteering that was practiced in Camden to 'Red Cross activities'. Despite this process, there was still sufficient flexibility within Camden social constraints, that the influence of 'modernity' allowed Camden's young women to exercise their independence by volunteering for the VAD. Here their mothers allowed them to fraternise with airmen without interference, because it was patriotic and war-related. As well some VAs also joined the AAMWS.

The British mobile canteen fund appeal successfully roused Camden's Britishness and produced the most successful wartime appeal in the town. It highlighted the British origins of the service ideology and how it connected with British nationalism in Camden. The success of the appeal was a complex mix of factors but stressed the importance of timing for wartime appeals, the role of the local press and its contribution to the social coercion that the WVS was prepared to use to support its patriotic fundraising. The appeal also showed the importance of the attachment to

place, the influence of fiscal patriotism and its association with the intimacy of rural life, the role of class and its maintenance of the status quo, all of which was related to Camden's rural ideology, as well as the support of local government.

The analysis of these WVS activities has illustrated the complex dynamic nature of social relations in wartime Camden. These relationships were multi-layered, with linkages of many types that created a vast web of social interactions within the community. The remainder of the thesis will further extend the examination of these characteristics through the activities of the WVS.

CHAPTER SIX

'OUR BOYS'

THE CAMDEN WVS AND SOLDIER COMFORTS

The most important service commitment undertaken by the Camden WVS membership was the manufacture and distribution of comforts to Camden servicemen. The chapter will outline and assess the importance of soldier comforts in the overall patriotic effort of the Camden WVS, showing the direct link between wartime volunteering and ideas of patriotism. The central emphasis of the discussion will be the detail of the comforts programme, but the chapter will also explore a number of related issues, including the role of parochialism, and the importance of 'thank you' letters from servicemen.

Soldier Comforts.

The provision of soldier comforts had two components: the general sewing and knitting of comforts that were supplied either to local military establishments, or sent to Sydney; and the weekly parcels and Christmas hampers that were sent to Camden servicemen on active duty. Similarly the Quirindi WVS organised comforts for the local militia, as well as monthly parcels and Christmas hampers for local servicemen. The WVS had found its 'niche' states Oppenheimer.¹

The provision of soldier comforts allowed women, who were largely confined by their familial and domestic duties, to step outside these social constraints, and gain collective kudos for their volunteering. Through their 'agency' these women used their domestic skills to equate volunteering with patriotism. This particularly applied to those women who had male relatives in the military on active service. Despite the individual invisibility of the women within the collective effort of providing soldier comforts, these women felt that they were 'doing their bit' for the war effort. Class

¹ Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 17-18; Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 118.

was a defining part of this activity as it was in many other aspects of Camden's female voluntarism. The female gentry organised the activity, but usually did not take part in any manual labour required to either make comforts or pack the parcels at the weekly working bees. This was typical of the gentrified nature of female philanthropy in Camden, New South Wales and Great Britain.

Sending comforts to soldiers began during the Boer War in 1900 when Sibella Macarthur Onslow, and her mother Elizabeth, were elected to the committee of the Camden branch of the New South Wales Patriotic Fund. Sibella promptly organised comforts to be sent to the Camden Mounted Rifles in South Africa.² As Red Cross secretary during the First World War, Macarthur Onslow helped organise the local manufacture of comforts at weekly sewing meetings. The comforts were sent to Red Cross headquarters in Sydney, where they were distributed to military hospitals and prisoners of war.³ On both occasions Macarthur Onslow had male members of her family on active service in the army. Other First World War organisations such as the Citizens' War Chest Fund, ACF and Battalion Comforts Funds also provided comforts for soldiers on active duty⁴, and were an influential example for the Camden WVS. This type of service by women was not unique to Camden, and was taken up by women all over the country.⁵

The effort of the Camden WVS was also modelled on the activities of the Women's War Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of New South Wales, which was established in November 1939.⁶ The Women's War Comforts Section sought to establish working auxiliaries in 'every suburb and... country town' to supply comforts and conduct fundraising.⁷ In January 1940 the Camden WVS held a 'well attended' meeting at the Camden town hall to hear the aims of the

² They were under the command of her brother James Macarthur-Onslow, (major). *Camden News*, 18 January 1900, 22 February 1900.

³ Between 80-100 Red Cross women put together nearly 21,000 garments at the regular Tuesday sewing meetings, which amounted to over 40,000 hours of effort. The programme was the most important wartime activity of the branch and consumed around half of all funds raised during the war. For more detail of comforts see Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 108-123; *Camden News*, 9 September 1915; CHS, Camden Red Cross Society, Minutes, 1917-1919.

⁴ Bowden, *The History of the Australian Comforts Fund*, pp. 33-55.

⁵ Nancy of Mudgee recalls that her 'Aunty Polly of Dunnedoo knitted hand-made knee length socks during the war. She made 175 pairs using four steel needles. You could always hear her needles going with her nimble fingers'. Letter, Nancy (Mudgee), to Ian MacNamarras, read on 'Australian All Over', 2BL, Sydney, 22 July 2001. (Radio Broadcast)

⁶ Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 40.

⁷ Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, p. 36.

Women's War Comforts Section of the Fund. According to the *Camden News* the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund provided

comforts in the way of extra clothing, food, sporting materials, etc, for the three branches of the service in training camps, on troopships, reserve camp, or in the front line.⁸

The Women's War Comforts Section of the Fund mirrored the service aims of the British WVS, and was administered by women from the New South Wales WVS and CWA, including Ruby Board, Ada Beveridge, and Marie Farquharson.⁹ The Section wanted,

To create a link with women's organisations working for the Fund; [and] to enable the interchange of ideas and to create a spirit of co-operation generally.¹⁰

The Women's War Comforts Section also wanted to eliminate duplication among women's organisations in New South Wales to ensure that all military camps were adequately supplied with comforts. Marie Farquharson maintained that the close 'co-operation' between the WVS movement and the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund provided a 'more effective working' environment for the supply of comforts.¹¹

In November 1939¹² the members of the Camden WVS¹³ sent their first comforts parcel of the war to the 45th Militia Battalion camped at Menangle Park Racecourse.¹⁴ It contained nine pairs of socks, twelve singlets and shirts, and six pairs of pyjamas.¹⁵ Marie Farquharson, the secretary of the New South Wales WVS,

8. The *News* maintained that: 'In helping to keep the men fit and provided with necessities, the Lord Mayor's Fund will lessen the work of the Red Cross, as by international law the Red Cross can only give assistance to the men on active service when they become sick or wounded, or are taken prisoners of war'. *Camden News*, 11 January 1940.

9. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 40; Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, pp. 34-38.

10. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 41.

11. AANSW, NESCF, 40/80B/495, 10/42303, 1940 WVS AR.

12. Shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939, local WVS centres had requested permission from the state headquarters, to provide entertainment, accommodation for writing letters and comforts for soldiers at local military bases. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR.

13. *Camden News*, 9 November 1939, 23 November 1939.

14. *Camden News*, 26 October 1939, 30 November 1939.

15. *Camden News*, 14 December 1939.

maintained that this effort was a 'service' of great 'value' and showed 'great initiative' and enthusiasm.¹⁶

By January 1940 the *Camden News* reported that the women of the WVS were 'ardently' at work providing hand-knitted comforts for the Naval War Auxiliary, which was co-ordinated through the Women's War Comforts Section.¹⁷ The *News* observed that there was always a strong demand for hand-knitted socks, and the assistant secretary of the WVS, Nancy Freestone, stated that the WVS always sought willing knitters.¹⁸ During the following week the WVS received pairs of hand-knitted blue and black socks from twenty-eight women.¹⁹ Eventually, Grace Moore and Albine Terry handed over fifty-eight pairs of socks to the Naval War Auxiliary at the 1940 annual meeting of the New South Wales WVS in Sydney.²⁰ By mid March, the Camden WVS had supplied a total of 200 pairs of socks.²¹ As well, Clair Stibbard organised one parcel of comforts to be sent to WVS headquarters in Sydney. It contained twenty-eight pairs of socks, a balaclava and three scarves.²²

The most important part of Camden WVS's soldier comforts effort was the packing and distribution of weekly parcels for Camden servicemen. The parcels were put together by the women from March 1940 and, unlike earlier comforts, were sent directly to Camden servicemen on active duty, not through Sydney.

A WVS sewing meeting to make items for the weekly parcels was organised every Monday in the Camden town hall, and was part of the general sewing effort by Camden women. As already discussed, other sewing efforts were a Red Cross sewing workshop on Tuesdays and a joint sewing party at Narellan Military Camp on Wednesdays (as mentioned in Chapter Five). The female clique ensured that none of these sewing ventures conflicted with each other, and all groups shared the limited number of sewing machines. At the WVS sewing meeting the items were cut out by

¹⁶ AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR.

¹⁷ Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, p. 38.

¹⁸ *Camden News*, 11 January 1940.

¹⁹ *Camden News*, 18 January 1940.

²⁰ The Naval Auxiliary 'was an independent body of women workers' who supplied comforts to sailors. *Camden News*, 22 February 1940.

²¹ *Camden News*, 7 March 1940, 21 March 1940.

²² The parcel was sent in January 1940. *Camden News*, 11 January 1940.

Mary de Saxe, sewn together by Margaret Pattison and Annie Dickinson on machines lent by the Red Cross, and then finally laundered, before being put into the parcels.²³ Between 1939 and 1945 these three women sewed 3860 items, which took them around 7,500 hours.²⁴ De Saxe and Pattison were members of the middle class, while Dickinson was from Camden's working class. De Saxe and Pattison each had one son in the army on active service. None of these women were members of the Camden elite. As previously discussed this was typical of the Camden's female gentry, they organised activities within Camden's female philanthropy and generally left it to lower class women to undertake the manual work at various working bees and workshops.

Other women contributed hand-knitted items for the parcels, for instance, Annie Hall of Elderslie made 246 pairs of hand-knitted socks between 1940-1945, which amounted to around 2,000 hours of effort.²⁵ Hall was a member of Camden's working class and she had two sons of active service in the army. Mrs Colvin knitted eighty-seven pairs of socks, which took her around 700 hours.²⁶ Of all the comforts made by the WVS, socks made up 61 per cent of the total, followed by underpants, which made up 33 per cent, and then pullovers, gloves, sea boot stockings and balaclava caps.²⁷

In 1940 the parcels were packed at a weekly Thursday meeting, and each man was sent a parcel that contained two pairs of hand knitted socks and a number of other items.²⁸ Eveline Powe was appointed to make up parcels for those men who had already left the district, as part of the effort associated with the soldier farewells,²⁹ which are discussed in Chapter Seven. Powe was a member of the WVS general committee and came from Camden's middle class.

^{23.} *Camden News*, 19 June 1941, 16 July 1942.

^{24.} These figures are based on calculations used for the manufacture of Red Cross comforts where the average time per article was 1.96 hours see Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 112-114.

^{25.} *Camden Advertiser*, 8 May 1941, 15 November 1945. Hours of work are calculated using figures for knitting socks in Willis, *War and Community*, p. 113.

^{26.} *Camden Advertiser*, 3 April 1941.

^{27.} Camden WVS, Annual Reports, 1939-1946, which appeared in *Camden News*, 20 April 1939, 25 July 1940, 19 June 1941, 16 July 1942, 5 August 1943, 10 August 1944, 9 August 1945.

^{28.} *Camden News*, 25 July 1940.

^{29.} *ibid.*

From a slow beginning in 1940, the Camden WVS gradually built up its ability to send an increasing quantity of weekly parcels to 'the boys'. From a rate of around one parcel per week in 1940, it increased to approximately thirty-four parcels per week in 1943 and 1944. Between 1940 and 1945 the women sent a total of 5574 weekly parcels. This was the most important activity for the WVS in terms of the expenditure and fundraising activities during the war. This was similar to the Quirindi WVS which sent monthly parcels to local service personnel. By the end of the war the women had sent 'approximately 7000 parcels, 6000 canteen orders, and 6000 bundles of magazines' (which included monthly parcels, Christmas hampers, and parcels to POWs).³⁰

In 1940 over 93 per cent of all expenditure for the Camden WVS was on soldier comforts, in 1941 this dropped to 68 per cent and in 1942 to 77 per cent, but by 1945 had increased to 89 per cent of total expenditure. Between 1940 and 1945 soldier comforts amounted to an average of 78 per cent of total expenditure, with each parcel on average worth 8/6d. The drop in 1941 and 1942 is misleading, as the actual amount spent increased from £55 in 1941, to £318 in 1941 and £511 in 1942 and peaked at £767 in 1945. Parcels were just a smaller proportion of the increased overall activity of the WVS in 1941 and 1942. This expenditure was funded from a number of sources but principally from donations, which were 33 per cent of total income, followed by dances 21 per cent, street stalls 11 per cent and carnivals 7 per cent.³¹ Street stalls were held on the last Friday night (late night shopping) of each month and were under the control of Mary Evans.³² Evans was a member of Camden's middle class, and had one son in the military.

The increase in the amount of funds raised between 1941 and 1942 was over 400 per cent³³ and this allowed the women to increase the contents of the parcels. The Camden parcels were similar to those sent by the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, which provided the model for this activity.³⁴ Each Camden parcel contained a

³⁰ Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 17.

³¹ Camden WVS, Annual Reports, 1939-1945.

³² *Camden News*, 16 January 1941.

³³ From £104 in 1941 to £511 in 1942. The largest increase occurred in donations which went from £87 to £205, dances raised £77 and a carnival raised £80 and street stalls were initiated and raised £36. The balance from other sources. Camden WVS, Annual Reports, 1940-1945.

³⁴ The list of items from the Fund could include handkerchiefs, singlets, flannel shirts, socks, pyjamas, housewife, soap, barley-sugar, razor blades, tooth-brush, tooth paste, tinned fruit, cake, coffee and milk, tobacco, stationery, playing cards, games or books. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, pp. 27, 30, 31, 45, Plate XV.

variety of items including underpants, undervests, cotton undersheets, woollen socks, cotton socks, razor blades, soap, boot-laces, butterscotch, chocolate, Camden newspapers, and talcum powder for parcels going to Malaya.³⁵ Hand knitted scarves and gloves were provided to servicemen on request.³⁶ Parcels also included copies of the *Bulletin*, *Smith's Weekly* and *Penguins*.³⁷ The *Camden News* maintained that the 'soldiers abroad' appreciated the newspaper being sent to them each week, and offered to pay the cost of all postage 'no matter where the paper [was] sent'.³⁸ It was noted in January 1941 that 'as the men frequently ask for local news', it was decided to 'appeal for copies of the local papers to be sent in the overseas parcels'.³⁹ Each parcel contained a card individually signed by Grace Moore, the secretary of the WVS [see plate] following the practice established by the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund.⁴⁰ The contents of the monthly parcels from Quirindi included 'tins of preserved fruit, Ideal milk, golden syrup, toilet soap, face washers, handkerchiefs and socks'. As well soldiers of embarkation leave received parcels, which contained 'pyjamas, sun hat, sandshoes, cigarettes and games for on board ship'. Due to shortages, canteen orders replaced parcels from 1943, and they were valued at 5/-'.⁴¹

Arthur Gibson gave his support to the WVS comforts parcels program in an editorial in the *Camden Advertiser*. He stated that:

the most important people in the world to-day are the local district men of the fighting services.

They are our own district representatives - our own flesh and blood - in the greatest war in all history. They are doing a big job, and doing it grandly, for you and for me!

I admit that it is most necessary for us to continually support the general patriotic movements - but, please, let us place our own boys first! It is to them - as individuals - that we must prove ourselves by the part we played at home while they risked death for us in other lands. They are fully entitled to judge us on this point alone.⁴²

³⁵ *Camden News*, 31 July 1941.

³⁶ *Camden News*, 19 June 1941.

³⁷ *Camden Advertiser*, 15 June 1944.

³⁸ The cost of the newspaper was 2d per week, or 8d per month. *Camden News*, 29 May 1941.

³⁹ *Camden News*, 16 January 1941.

⁴⁰ Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, p. 320.

⁴¹ Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 18.

⁴² *Camden Advertiser*, 7 August 1941.

Gibson suggested that for every £1 that an individual subscribed to a patriotic fund, 'give 12/- for the benefit of local boys and 8/- for general purposes.'⁴³ Gibson had good reason to support the WVS. He was the secretary/treasurer of the WVS men's auxiliary and his wife, Elsie, was a member of the general committee of the Camden WVS.

The names of Camden servicemen were collected by Sarah Scholes and Arthur Gibson and were published by both the *Camden News* and the *Camden Advertiser*. The first of the lists of names called 'honor rolls', appeared in July 1940, shortly after the British defeat at Dunkirk.⁴⁴ (No women's names ever appeared in either these honor rolls, or in the honor roll of 465 names compiled for the 1946 'Welcome Home' celebrations.⁴⁵) Names were always listed alphabetically irrespective of rank, a practice adopted by the *Camden News* from the Boer War. This phenomenon was quite unusual in Camden, as this was the only occasion when social rank was ignored. Class, status and prestige were important in every other wartime activity in Camden, especially those organised by women's groups.

Gibson made a concerted effort to keep the addresses of Camden servicemen updated for the WVS and the Camden District Soldier's and Citizen's Association.⁴⁶ Gibson maintained that 'by supplying this information promptly' the relatives and friends of the troops performed two services; they ensured 'a regular supply of appreciated comforts to the servicemen', and saved 'an immense amount of unnecessary handling' by the 'postal staffs, who are hard-pressed to cope with the heavy wartime mails'. He observed that:

The incorrect address of your serviceman, when a parcel is returned, must be most disappointing to Camden WVS members who are doing a grand job for our local district boys.⁴⁷

The implication was that carelessness by the sender was a hindrance, and at worst unpatriotic.

43. *ibid.*

44. *Camden Advertiser*, 11 July 1940; *Camden News*, 4 July 1940.

45. *Camden News*, 12 September 1946.

46. *Camden Advertiser*, 4 July 1940.

47. *Camden Advertiser*, 27 January 1944.

Christmas hampers for Camden servicemen were another part of the soldier comforts program run by the WVS. Sending Christmas hampers to servicemen was based on both precedent and example. Members of the Camden Red Cross first sent Christmas parcels to Camden servicemen in 1917.⁴⁸ And 'two State Patriotic Funds' and the Women's War Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund sent Christmas hampers to Australian troops in 1939.⁴⁹ The Camden WVS initially sent 40 Christmas hampers to Camden servicemen in 1940, and by 1945 the number had increased to 356. In total, between 1940 and 1945, the WVS sent 1033 hampers.⁵⁰

An examination of the hamper lists, how they were compiled and the details of the individual hampers, gives an insight into the broader social culture of Camden. In September 1941, the Camden WVS decided to send Christmas hampers to all servicemen on its overseas comforts parcels mailing list. The WVS published the full mailing list in the *Camden News* in November 1941, and appealed for community contributions.⁵¹ However, as the 'time for despatch was so short' the WVS decided to purchase the hampers from Anthony Horderns, at a cost of 13/- each, including postage.⁵² This was well above the average cost of the WVS's comforts parcels, and was quite expensive when compared to the cost of hampers for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of 5/- in 1942, and 10/- in 1943.⁵³ The decision of the WVS to purchase the hampers and their relatively high cost indicates that the ability of the WVS to raise funds from the community was hardly a problem (as already noted in the canteen appeal) and confirms the high regard the Camden community had for the WVS.

The 1942 Christmas hamper appeal was opened in October 1942 by printing all the names of local servicemen on the front page of the *Camden News*.⁵⁴ There were 129

⁴⁸ The Red Cross decided to send Christmas parcels to 'Camden lads... on active service'. As Red Cross money could not be used for this purpose the women had to specially mark their donation 'Christmas Gift' for the branch treasurer. Each parcel contained socks, playing cards, mascots, pipes, knives, mouth organ, tooth brushes, mascots and other items. The names and addresses of the men were collated at the *Camden News* office. *Camden News*, 26 July 1917, 2 August 1917.

⁴⁹ Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 112; Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, p. 318.

⁵⁰ Camden WVS, Annual Reports, 1939-1945.

⁵¹ *Camden News*, 6 November 1941.

⁵² CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 11 September 1941.

⁵³ Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, pp. 113-114.

⁵⁴ *Camden News*, 8 October 1942.

names on the list, from all of the services, across all ranks, but, again, no women. The hamper contained a variety of small luxuries that men at the front line found hard to obtain, and compared favourably with the list of items in the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund 1942 Christmas hamper which had eleven items.⁵⁵ The items in the Camden WVS Christmas hamper were:

- 1 tin peaches,
- 1 tin strawberry jam,
- 1 tin full cream milk,
- 1 tin Arnott's plum pudding,
- 1 large packet of cigarettes,
- 1 packet Aspros,
- 1 packet Minties,
- 2 packets PK chewing gum,
- 1 vegetable soup,
- 1 tin coffee and milk,
- 1 tin Nestles cream,
- 1 tin Red Feather cheese
- 1 tin veal and tongue paste.⁵⁶

The list had an eye for the practical and was aimed at making life at the front a little more comfortable for the men: the meat and soup for their sustenance, pudding, peaches and sweets as a treat, cream and milk to put in their tea and coffee, and the practical, in the form of Aspros. Wrigley's PK chewing gum was part of the American combat K ration and was promoted as a 'great reliever of wartime tension'.⁵⁷ An 'ack-ack bombardier, of Orangeville', congratulated the Camden WVS 'on their choice of articles', and a lance-corporal from Camden maintained that 'the parcels always contain[ed] just the things that we seem to want'.⁵⁸

The 1943 Christmas hamper was sent to 312 servicemen and the treats included barley sugar, chocolate blocks,⁵⁹ Christmas cake supplied by Stuckey Bros,

^{55.} The Fund's 1942 Christmas hamper contained 11lb Christmas cake, 1/2lb Christmas pudding, 1/2 chocolate ration, 11b tin of peaches, 4oz tin of cream, 1 tube of toothpaste, 2oz tin of tobacco, 1 packet of cigarette papers, 2 razor blades, 4oz packet of cheese, 2 packets of chewing gum. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 113.

^{56.} *Camden News*, 8 October 1942.

^{57.} Bailey, *The Home Front: USA*, p. 84.

^{58.} *Camden Advertiser*, 30 March 1944.

^{59.} *Camden News*, 16 December 1943.

cigarettes and sweets,⁶⁰ and still compared favourably with the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund's hamper which had been increased to seventeen items.⁶¹ Toothpaste, shaving sticks, a writing pad, envelopes and a pencil were included for the first time.⁶² In 1944, 356 Christmas hampers were sent out.⁶³

As mentioned earlier, the Camden WVS was not alone in sending Christmas hampers. The Quirindi WVS sent a cake and sweets in their hampers and in 1943 there were 180 men on the mailing list. Muir Taylor of Taylor's Bakery, who made the cakes, recalled that 'it was sad when a name had to be crossed off' the mailing lists. The cakes were packed in a tin 'of specified size' and filled with 'whatever sweets would fit in, then they were sewn up in calico and addressed'.⁶⁴

The hamper mailing lists published in the *Camden News* reveal some interesting social characteristics of the servicemen. The 1941 WVS mailing list had 119 men of various ranks of all services. Of the servicemen listed 21 per cent were Roman Catholic and the remainder Protestant, which was similar to the religious breakdown of the Camden population.⁶⁵ Among these servicemen 90 per cent were in the Army while only 9 per cent enlisted in the RAAF. The bias of this list towards Army enlistment reflected the level of the education and background of Camden servicemen as rural workers.⁶⁶

The 1941 hamper list reflected the existing social structure of the Camden area. The men with the highest military rank came from the Macarthur family, which had a very strong military tradition⁶⁷: Denzil Macarthur Onslow, a lieutenant-colonel

⁶⁰ *Camden News*, 10 August 1944.

⁶¹ The Fund's 1943 Christmas hamper contained 1 plum pudding (1/2lb), 1 Christmas cake (1lb), 1 tin nuts and fruit (1/2lb), 1 tin fruit (1lb), 1 tin cream (4oz), 1 pkt chocolate (1/2lb), 3 pkts chewing gum, 1 tin tobacco (2oz), 1 pkt cigarette papers, 1 tube toothpaste, 1 tube shaving cream, 1 face washer, 1 handkerchief, 1 housewife, 1 writing pad (40 sheets), 10 envelopes, 2 air mail stamped letters. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 114.

⁶² CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 15 July 1943, 12 August 1943, 9 December 1943.

⁶³ *Camden News*, 9 August 1945.

⁶⁴ Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 18.

⁶⁵ *Camden News*, 6 November 1941. The Catholics made up 25 per cent of the population in Camden. Commonwealth of Australia, 1933 *Census*. A local district profile was compiled by author from 1933 Census, Werriwa Electoral Roll and local cemetery transcripts.

⁶⁶ Of total enlistments for the Australian military in 1941 76 per cent joined the Army, and 18 per cent joined the RAAF, which required a higher level of education. See Vampley, *Australia's Historical Statistics*, p. 413.

⁶⁷ For example, four brothers served in the Boer War, four served in the First World War and three brothers served in the Second World War. Members of the family were in charge of the local unit of

(later knighted and became a major-general), and Edward Macarthur Onslow (a major, was later promoted to lieutenant-colonel). The names on the list also emphasised the close kinship network within the Camden area. Apart from the Macarthurs, other families who had men on the list included Adams (three members), Chapman (two), Downes (two), Hall (two), and Williams, (three) along with a host of others. All together 20 per cent of the men on the list had female relatives who were members of the Camden WVS.

The 1942 Christmas hamper list was similarly published on the front page of the *Camden News* with 130 names.⁶⁸ The relative balance of religious affiliation was largely unchanged, as was the proportion of men in each service. Among this list of men there was a slightly higher percentage of those holding a rank at 23 per cent. The major difference between the 1941 and 1942 lists was the proportion of men with female relatives in the Camden WVS, which dropped from 20 per cent in 1941 to 16 per cent in 1942. That is, while the WVS membership remained steady, yet the proportion fell and this was probably a reflection of conscription.

The sending of parcels was not the sole responsibility of the WVS. In a separate initiative, the *Camden Advertiser* actively encouraged Camden residents to send parcels on their own behalf to local servicemen overseas in 1941. The *Advertiser* maintained that,

Most of us know someone abroad - a friend or relative - who would be cheered by receiving a parcel from home.

The newspaper gave advice on the parcels' contents and stated that 'canned delicacies' were 'quite suitable', 'but remember that something prepared by your own hands will give just that personal touch which is always appreciated'. The newspaper observed that when wrapping the parcel,

first of all choose a box of suitable size. All foods must be in airtight tins, and to ensure this a strip of sticking plaster placed around the lid is helpful. The items should be wrapped in paper to prevent them rattling, and any spaces

the Australian Light Horse, the Camden Mounted Rifles, from the 1890s to 1939. The local Rifle Club was an offshoot of the unit and held shoots at *Macquarie Grove*, where the Regiment undertook manoeuvres.

⁶⁸ *Camden News*, 8 October 1942.

should be stuffed firmly with paper so that contents will not move about. The whole box should then be wrapped in several thicknesses of paper, and finally enclosed in unbleached calico and stitched strongly. The forwarding directions can then be printed on the parcel with wet indelible pencil. Remember, too, that the name and address of the sender is very necessary.⁶⁹

Calico was rationed in June 1943, as part of the general restriction placed on manchester and household drapery, however, in December 1943 the *Camden News* reported that the Director of Rationing, JB Cumming, announced that unbleached calico could be purchased coupon free for wrapping servicemen's parcels. To stop unauthorised use of the calico only one piece twenty-seven inches by thirty-six inches could be purchased at a time. As well, the retailer had to record the name and regimental number of the servicemen, the name and address of the purchaser, the ration book number of the purchasers, and their signature.⁷⁰

The Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund also forwarded parcels to servicewomen.⁷¹ From the available records it appears that only two servicewomen were sent parcels by the Camden WVS. One was nursing sister Ena Hansen in August 1941. The secretary of the WVS got in touch with her to find out what would be a suitable gift.⁷² This was the only occasion during the war when the WVS made a special effort to contact a particular person about comforts. This reflected Hansen's unique position as 'the only local nurse serv[ing] in the forces' at that stage of the war.⁷³

Ena Hansen, Pilot-Officer, was attached to No. 3 RAAF Hospital at Richmond. She was the daughter of Sophie and Lars Hansen and was born at 'Cobbitty Paddocks'. She trained at Parramatta District Hospital, practised as a private nurse, then a district nurse and enlisted in the RAAF Nursing Service. Two of her sisters were also nurses, her two brothers had served in the First World War, and her nephew was serving in England with the RAAF.⁷⁴ Hansen was single, a trained and qualified

⁶⁹. *Camden Advertiser*, 29 May 1941.

⁷⁰. *Camden News*, 16 December 1943.

⁷¹. Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, p. 326.

⁷². CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 August 1941.

⁷³. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 August 1941.

⁷⁴. Two of her sisters were also nurses, Dagmar Hansen at Camden District Hospital and Edna Hansen at the Kenny Clinic, Newcastle. Her two brothers served in the First World War, Victor Hansen, staff-sergeant, Australian Field Artillery, killed in action, and Harold Hansen, corporal, 3rd Battalion, and her nephew serving in England with RAAF, Harold Jenkins, pilot-officer, of Penrith.

nurse, and come from a family that had a strong military tradition which provided a sound patriotic role model for the district. She was a local personality, with a strong affiliation to the area through the kinship and personal contact network.

Hansen was accorded the same social status as Camden's male volunteers by the WVS as a patriotic role model, and for the purposes of the soldier comforts she was accepted as 'one of our boys'. She also exhibited the characteristics that Reading felt were typical of British WVS volunteers and the women's service ideology. The use by the Camden WVS of the titles Sister Hansen and Pilot-Officer Hansen suggests an uncertainty on the part of the WVS when it came to women in the services. Despite this, the use of both titles indicates an acknowledgment by the Camden WVS that although Hansen had joined the military she still retained her femininity.⁷⁵ This ambivalence was not restricted to Camden and was evident in women's magazines. The *Australian Women's Weekly*, for example, placed emphasis on the femininity of nurses and women in the services. Nurses according to the *Australian Women's Weekly*, were 'fine types of womanhood', 'charming', 'highly qualified' and had 'lipstick and powder-puff [as] part of their wartime equipment.'⁷⁶

The only other servicewoman that could be confirmed to have actually received parcels from the WVS, was Alice Smart of Camden. She was a corporal in the WAAAF. She wrote a 'thank you' letter to the WVS in December 1944, which was published in the *Camden Advertiser*. In her letter, which was the only one from a servicewoman that appeared in the *Advertiser*, she described the Camden WVS as 'wonderful people' and explained the events that surrounded the arrival of her Christmas hamper:

A parcel is always the centre of attraction amongst the girls, especially when a cake is enclosed. By the time supper was over the cake had vanished and was enjoyed by many.

I can well imagine how thankful the boys are when they receive their parcels.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Camden Advertiser*, 7 August 1941.
⁷⁶ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 August 1941.
⁷⁷ *Australian Women's Weekly*, 30 December 1939.
Camden Advertiser, 7 December 1944.

Apart from Smart and Hansen, five women joined the AAMWS after 1942 and another eleven Camden women joined other military services.⁷⁸ But there is no indication in either the WVS minutes or other records that these women were sent parcels. Perhaps by 1942 their parcels were simply subsumed within the overall comforts effort of the WVS, which by that stage of the war completely dominated Camden WVS activities.

Some Camden men, however, slipped through the net. One wrote to the author of this thesis, stating that he

received no parcels or other communications from the Camden WVS or any other Camden body during my service.

He suggested that this was probably because,

I enlisted in Sydney whilst boarding at Enfield. No one at home thought to tell anyone that I had enlisted. I did of course benefit from WVS [activities] at other places, eg, at Nowra, Albury and interstate. [Although] on one occasion I received a parcel of knitted items from a South Australian organisation, a sleeveless pullover, gloves and a scarf, all dark blue to match our uniform... some of the items still in use some years later.⁷⁹

The comforts activities by Camden women was not unique, and although this serviceman did not receive parcels from the Camden WVS, he felt that this was more than compensated for by the patriotic activities of other Australian women.

Although the parcels and hampers dominated the provision of comforts, the WVS was also called on to assist in other ways. The Camden WVS entertained servicemen from the 2/AIF stationed at Ingleburn Military Camp and the militia at Menangle under the initiative of the 'lonely soldier' programme of the New South Wales WVS.⁸⁰ The Camden WVS conducted a fundraising dance to establish a comforts

⁷⁸. *Camden News*, 12 September 1946.

⁷⁹. Letter, C.S. to I.C.W., 12 April 2002.

⁸⁰. *Camden News*, 1 February 1940, 21 March 1940. The question of the 'lonely soldier' had been raised by the state executive of the WVS and other centres such as Parramatta WVS. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS Annual Report. The Camden WVS provided entertainment and Christmas cheer for the militia at Menangle. *Camden News*, 26 October 1939, 30 November 1939.

fund for the universal trainees, in response to a request from the commanding officer of the Narellan Military Camp.⁸¹ The WVS supplied the names and addresses of ten men 'to girls in [the] Wrigley's factory' as the soldiers had 'no people of their own and these girls [could] send them letters and parcels'.⁸² Other WVS centres, such as Quirindi organised similar activities. These women organised entertainment two days a month for the RAAF trainees and instructors at the Braefield aerodrome, as well as regular Christmas parties. The Quirindi WVS organised, in co-operation with the Quirindi and District Patriotic and War Fund Committee, a weekend's recreational leave for RAAF personnel stationed at Tamworth in 1941. They organised sporting activities during the Saturday, followed by a high tea and a social, while Sunday was 'a more relaxed programme'. This allowed fraternisation between the 'young people' and brought many 'new social contacts'. These types of personal contact between local girls and young airmen of the RAAF/RAF are a recurring theme in wartime activities in Camden and elsewhere.⁸³

In October 1940, the Camden WVS took over the work of the RAAF comforts fund committee. Originally, the eight members of the all male committee aimed to raise funds for the purchase of sporting equipment for the RAAF Central Flying School at Camden aerodrome.⁸⁴ The men had decided to 'assist in any capacity [by] securing and maintaining comforts for all who have enlisted for military service'.⁸⁵

The mayor Stan Kelloway had originally convened the committee, after the British defeat at Dunkirk. It had conducted one fundraising supper dance in conjunction with Camden CWA Younger Set, who were the daughters of the women of the Camden CWA.⁸⁶ Despite its best intentions the male committee quickly disappeared without a trace and support for the RAAF was left to the WVS. This was not the only time during the war that the women of the WVS took over a war-related activity started by Camden men (see Chapter Eight). As a matter of interest, four of the committee had female relatives in the WVS and three were members of the

81. The commanding officer was Major Weale. *Camden News*, 17 April 1941; CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 4 April 1941.

82. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 November 1940.

83. Durrant, *Quirindi*, pp. 18-19.

84. The members of the committee were Stan Kelloway, C. Baker, John Clarke, William Coates, Henry Haylock, William Pattison, Bert Price, Harold Taplin. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

85. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

86. *ibid.*

Camden District Soldier and Citizens' Association, the body responsible for the soldier's farewells.

In June 1941, the commanding officer of the RAAF Central Flying School requested the assistance from the Camden WVS, to 'maintain the health and efficiency' of his men. Subsequently, ten members of the Camden WVS visited the base, and decided to purchase seven electric fans for the rooms in the administration block, six cane chairs for the recreation room and gauze windows and doors for the mess room at a cost of £39.⁸⁷ In January 1943, RAF squadrons were temporarily stationed at Camden aerodrome, and the WVS donated three wireless sets, which cost £54/10/-.⁸⁸

Parochialism

As discussed in Chapter Two parochialism was part of Camden's rural ideology and it had both positive and negative effects on the wartime volunteering and fundraising activities of the WVS. When the local community had taken a cause on board, parochialism was used to advantage. The highly successful mobile canteen fund discussed previously is one example. But when the community felt that 'outsiders' were trying to direct the local war effort, parochialism ensured that the projects failed. Two examples are provided by the history of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in Camden and the actions taken by the Camden WVS to protect its interests in the distribution of soldier comforts.

Support for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in the Camden area during the war could only be described at best as patchy. The WVS gave occasional donations,⁸⁹ sponsored the January town hall meeting and copied many of its

⁸⁷ The commanding officer of the base was Commander Cole. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 10 October 1940; *Camden News*, 26 June 1941.

⁸⁸ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 January 1943.

⁸⁹ The Camden WVS donated £20 in December 1940. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 19 December 1940. In 1941 Padre Hyde gave an account of valuable work done by Australian Comforts Fund overseas at the September meeting of the Camden WVS and the women donated £10 to the Fund. CHS, Camden WVS, 11 September 1941, 4 December 1941. In 1942 the Camden WVS donated £10 to the ACF's Year of War Appeal, and also donated £20 to the Fund in 1942, 1944 and 1945. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 10 September 1942, 9 April 1942, 10 September 1942; Camden WVS, Annual Report, 1942-1945; *Camden News*, 10 August 1944, 9 August 1945.

activities, and although the WVS and CWA were both registered as agents for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in Camden, neither undertook active fundraising on its behalf. The State Government had given the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund sole responsibility for comforts in New South Wales. It had the authority to delegate its authority to other organisations,⁹⁰ such as the New South Wales WVS and other voluntary agencies.⁹¹

Despite representations from the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, Camden Municipal Council had declined to establish a branch of the Fund in the town because of the 'patriotic' activities of the Camden WVS.⁹² The Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund had automatically appointed mayors and shire presidents as its representatives in all local government areas in New South Wales. For the Fund to succeed in Camden, it needed the support of Stan Kelloway, the mayor.⁹³ The Council obviously felt that the establishment of a branch of the Fund was an unnecessary duplication of patriotic organisations in Camden and a wasteful use of the Council's limited resources. When the Council did receive the Fund's *Bulletins*, it simply forwarded them to the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association.⁹⁴ The Association did hold one Comforts Day for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in 1941.⁹⁵

Perhaps the fate of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund was foreshadowed by events in 1940. The executive of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund had decided in October 1940 to eliminate duplication of fundraising for soldier comforts

⁹⁰ The initial responsibility for comforts was given in July 1939. In September 1939 the Fund was granted a permit under the *Charitable Collections Act 1934 (NSW)*. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 9. Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p. 158.

⁹¹ Registration was also given to the CWA, RSSAILA, Salvation Army, its own branches and others. AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR; Ada Beveridge, 'State President's Message, A Guide for Members During War Time', *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 November 1939, p. 1.

⁹² CMC, Minutes, 9 October 1939, 13 November 1939. A letter had been sent by Sir Norman Nock, the Lord Mayor of Sydney and President of the Fund. Melanie Oppenheimer notes in her thesis that the letter contained draft rules, objects of the Fund and YMCA and Salvation Army (which became affiliated with the Fund), and messages from the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*, pp. 210, fn 20, 21.

⁹³ AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR.

⁹⁴ CMC, Minutes, 10 March 1941.

⁹⁵ *Camden Advertiser* 10 April 1941. In December 1940 the Camden District Soldier and Citizens Association notified the Council that it was seeking direct registration under *Charitable Collections Act 1934 (NSW)*, and not affiliating with the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. *Camden News* 19 December 1940.

in New South Wales.⁹⁶ The Camden WVS immediately saw this as a threat to its own soldier comforts effort. In November 1940, the Camden WVS held a special meeting to discuss the 'threat to centralise all control of soldiers' comforts' by the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. The Camden WVS wanted Camden Council 'to protest' against the Fund's policy,⁹⁷ and the women decided to send the WVS president, Zoe Crookston, secretary, Hilda Moore, and treasurer, Albine Terry to a protest meeting in Sydney.⁹⁸ The Sydney meeting turned into a lively affair and 'the conference hall was so crowded that many people had to stand'.⁹⁹ Some groups at the meeting, including representatives from neighbouring Wollondilly Shire Council, argued that centralisation of control interfered with the maintenance of local interest and individual effort,¹⁰⁰ the essence of parochialism.

The Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund was highly critical of parochialism, but there was effectively little it could do about it.¹⁰¹ These events would have strengthened the resolve of the Camden WVS to ensure that the money local women raised for comforts only went to local servicemen. This attitude was not isolated to Camden. The Quirindi and District Patriotic and War Fund Committee, although formed at the request of the Lord Mayor's Fund, 'reserved the right to dispense its money where it chose', which meant the Quirindi Red Cross and WVS.¹⁰² Problems with parochialism were not restricted to the Lord Mayor's Fund. Oppenheimer examines the problems with parochialism faced by C Banfield (Director of Commonwealth Loans) and the War Loan Committees. Banfield complained about competition from patriotic funds and shortages of volunteers. Oppenheimer argues that Banfield never fully appreciated that volunteers, who were mainly women, would prefer to work for a local patriotic fund (such as the Red Cross or WVS) than

⁹⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1940, and also see 23 October 1940, 30 October 1940, 5 November 1940. The Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund tried to centralise fundraising because of: the low level of remittances of monies from its country branches [Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*, pp. 358-60; Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, pp. 10-12, 139-140], and the splintering of patriotic fundraising through the approval of small funds with no affiliation to the Fund, principally due to parochialism. The State Government also granted permits 'to newly-formed patriotic bodies in centres where certain Members of Parliament had close political interests'. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 10.

⁹⁷ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 November 1940.

⁹⁸ The meeting was held on Monday, 4 November 1940. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 31 October 1940.

⁹⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 November 1940.

¹⁰⁰ For instance Wollondilly Shire Council has co-operated with Botany Council in protesting against any interference by the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund with the administration of local patriotic bodies. *Camden Advertiser*, 21 November 1940.

¹⁰¹ This is discussed in Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, pp. 10-12, 139-140; Badham Jackson, *Proud Story*, pp. xxix-xxx; Oppenheimer, *Volunteers in Action*, pp. 358-360.

¹⁰² Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 19.

a government body. Oppenheimer maintains that the fundraising of these volunteers were 'essentially community concerns', who preferred working independently, 'within and for, their local communities'.¹⁰³

In Camden the opposition to the centralisation of comforts by the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund was supported not only by the WVS, but also by the Camden Municipal Council, local newspapers and other groups. The Camden WVS received vociferous support from the *Camden Advertiser* which ran the headline 'Lord Mayor's Fund Grab, How We View the Situation'. Arthur Gibson, the publisher of the *Advertiser*, asserted that the decision of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund 'to amalgamate all patriotic efforts will cause a storm of protest from Camden'. Further,

It [was] stated that in future, district comforts funds - other than Red Cross - must send money and comforts they collect to the Lord Mayor's Fund which [was] the State division of the Australian Comforts Fund. This newspaper state[s] that the Camden Centre of the Women's Voluntary Services [is] better organised today than the larger centralised patriotic bodies in Sydney. Our local women have planned so thoroughly that all local men in camp in Australia and those serving overseas are assured of a regular supply of comforts from their own home centre.¹⁰⁴

As far as the *Camden Advertiser* was concerned

... our vote goes to the local organisation when the question of comforts for *our own district boys* is being debated.¹⁰⁵

Gibson tapped into Camden's parochialism, voiced a local mistrust of 'outsiders', and a resentment of outside interference in local affairs. These were all part of Camden's rural ideology (discussed in Chapter One).

In the end, the Camden WVS need not have worried about the threat of centralisation. Zoe Crookston reported to the Camden WVS, that the WVS was in a

¹⁰³ Oppenheimer, *All Work No Pay*, p.140.
¹⁰⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 7 November, 1940.
¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

different position to the Battalion Comforts Fund, which distributed their comforts through the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund's central depot. WVS state headquarters advised the Camden WVS to carry on as usual, and the meeting resolved to do just that.¹⁰⁶ It was obvious that the state executive of the WVS supported the activities of the Camden WVS, even if the Camden centre did not distribute comforts through the WVS central depot in Sydney. By the end of the war, the state executive thought that the Camden WVS centre had done a wonderful job with respect to its patriotic activities.¹⁰⁷

This incident highlighted the role of parochialism in wartime activities and the problems it caused for both national and state-based appeals and fundraising in Camden. As the mayor was the local representative of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, his support was essential to establish any local auxiliary. The Council felt the Camden WVS adequately occupied this role and saw no benefit in unnecessary duplication of the work already underway. This resistance by Camden officials considerably weakened the ability of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund to establish a local branch and raise funds in the district. In the end it meant that the Fund did not have any significant presence in the Camden area during the war. It could only establish one branch at Thirlmere and one registered patriotic fund at Bringelly.¹⁰⁸

Parochialism was a constant element in the Camden war effort and was again evident in August 1941 when the Camden WVS discussed who should receive the weekly soldier comforts parcels. After the WVS had secured the right to send parcels to local 'boys', it now shifted its attention to who was actually a 'local'. Rita Tucker proposed that parcels should only be sent to 'local men who are serving overseas in

^{106.} CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 November 1940.

^{107.} The other only other centres to achieve this distinction were Parramatta and Penrith, from a total of 190 WVS Centres (1939). Of these 160 were country centres and 30 city centres. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 3(3), WVS Clipping Book, 22 March 1939.

¹⁰⁸ Nepean Shire Council established Nepean Shire Patriotic Fund affiliated with Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund and registered on 29 February 1940. Office-bearers were T.G. Scott, shire clerk (president), Councillor Hewitt, Councillor Rose (vice-presidents), LG Paterson (secretary), RO Young (treasurer), Mr Paterson and Mr Cameron, Bringelly, Mr Harrison and Mr Chittick, Cobbitty, Mr Laird Mulgoa (committee). *Camden News*, 29 February 1940; Paterson's wife was vice-president of the Bringelly-Rossmore Red Cross from 1942-44. Willis, *War and Community*, p. 273. The only branch of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in the local area existed at Thirlmere. By April 1944 it had £639 in cash on hand, had sent 1679 articles, including 478 pairs of socks, to the Fund's headquarters. The Wollondilly Shire Council congratulated them on 'a notable effort'. *Camden Advertiser*, 27 April 1944.

His Majesty Forces¹⁰⁹ and by this she meant Camden servicemen. Men from the villages that surrounded Camden were excluded. This resulted in an offer from a Mt Hunter resident, Mrs Windred

to organise functions so that Mt Hunter residents could contribute about £20 per annum to WVS [sic] to help provide parcels for local boys.¹¹⁰

Mrs Windred supported this offer by handing over £9 to the Camden WVS that had been raised by a local dance in the village. The WVS willingly accepted her proposition¹¹¹ but refused to budge from its parochial position. The WVS were quite happy to see the villages raise funds for weekly parcels for their men, but Camden fundraising was for Camden boys.

In October, the WVS established a sub-committee to

enquire into the names on [the] WVS list and to draw up a list of rules re [sic] the acceptance of names for parcels.

The sub-committee was convened by Nancy Freestone, the assistant secretary, and consisted of the four WVS executive officers, two members of general committee and two representatives of the men's auxiliary.¹¹² The sub-committee met in December 1941 and was attended by WVS president, Zoe Crookston, secretary, Grace Moore, treasurer, Albine Terry, Rita Tucker, Mary de Saxe, and William Cruikshank. Tucker was the wife of a Sydney businessman, president of the Camden CWA and member of the Camden Red Cross. De Saxe was the wife of the Commonwealth Bank manager, who was vice-president of the RSSAILA. She was vice-president of the Camden CWA and a member of the Camden Red Cross. Cruikshank was president of the WVS men's auxiliary and the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association. Apologies at the meeting were received from Nancy Freestone and Arthur Gibson. The sub-committee was particularly concerned with defining who was a 'local', and in the process excluding those who were not. Amongst those excluded were the servicemen who passed through the district's local military establishments - the RAAF Base at Camden aerodrome, Narellan Military

^{109.} CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 August 1941.

^{110.} CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 11 September 1941.

^{111.} *ibid.*

^{112.} CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 13 November 1941.

Camp, Eastern Command Training School at *Studley Park*, and Menangle Military Camp.

The sub-committee's recommendations were passed without amendment at the following WVS meeting and reflected the determination of the Camden WVS to restrict parcels to men from local families, especially those who had female relatives in the WVS. The recommendations stated:

- (1) That if funds permit parcels of comforts will be mailed regularly each month to any servicemen overseas or at Darwin if (they) [sic] he was
 - (a) a permanent resident of the Camden District at the time of enlistment;
 - (b) a man whose next of kin is a permanent resident of the Camden District and a member of the Camden Centre of Women's Voluntary Services.
- (2) That any servicemen known to the Committee as deserving of special attention shall have first preference in the sending of parcels. (ie, If funds do not permit of monthly parcels being sent to every man on the list they shall still be sent to these men).
- (3) That for every £10 contributed per annum by any Camden WVS Auxiliary, regular parcels may be sent to another serviceman, provided that he is not eligible under any other clause.
- (4) That there should be a standing Sub-Committee to consider every new name as it is submitted.¹¹³

Rule (1) was the essence of Camden parochialism, and it ensured that parcels were only sent to those men who were considered a true 'local'. The WVS considered local servicemen to be men who were long-term residents, had kinship ties of more than one generation or had married into a local family. These rules were the true expression of parochialism, but the members left themselves enough flexibility within the rules to include 'outsiders' if they were deemed to be deserving enough. For example in December 1942 the WVS approved a request for parcels to be sent to Corporal Shelton because he had no relatives in Australia.¹¹⁴ Despite the restrictive nature of the rules, the progress of the war and the increasing number of Camden

¹¹³ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 4 December 1941.

¹¹⁴ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 10 December 1942.

men in the military, meant that the number of parcels sent within the WVS restrictions increased from 460 in 1941 to 1440 in 1942.¹¹⁵

Appreciation of Soldier Comforts.

Letters from servicemen thanking local women for parcels were quite common in the Boer War and the First World War, and many examples were published in the *Camden News*. Other wartime organisations also received similar letters and published them.¹¹⁶ Letters from servicemen were a tangible physical and psychological link between the battlefield and the homefront, and were full of heartfelt emotion and sentiments.

The first letter of thanks received by the Camden WVS in 1939 came from the chaplain of the 45th Militia Battalion camped at Menangle Park Racecourse. The letter was in response to the WVS's first comforts parcel of the war. The letter was published in the *Camden News* and stated:

I have to thank you, on behalf of the officers and men of our unit for the splendid parcel of underclothing.... These articles of clothing are particularly appreciated by the recipients, all of whom are in poor circumstances and unable to provide much for themselves. The men are deeply sensitive of the kindness of thought which prompted the gifts, and desire of me to convey to you their sincere thanks.

Chaplain Geo L Sneddon
45th Battalion, Menangle.¹¹⁷

This was a generalised response to the comforts parcel on behalf of the battalion and acknowledged the patriotic service role of the WVS women.

The women of the Camden WVS, like the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, received hundreds of unsolicited letters of thanks from servicemen for comforts.¹¹⁸

^{115.} *Camden News*, 19 June 1941, 16 July 1942.

^{116.} Bowden, *The History of the Australian Comforts Fund*, pp. 30-31.

^{117.} *Camden News*, 14 December 1939.

^{118.} For thank you letters for the Fund see Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, pp. 124-127.

By March 1944 the Camden WVS had received over '2000 written messages of appreciation' from Camden servicemen providing 'convincing evidence that our boys highly regard the thoughtful aims of the WVS organisation'.¹¹⁹ In the twelve months to the end of May 1944 alone the women received over 400 letters.¹²⁰ This was not isolated to Camden. The Quirindi WVS received 'hundreds of letters of appreciation from members of the services for books, papers, canteen orders...'.¹²¹

The Camden WVS selectively released letters to the Camden press to assist the fundraising for comforts parcels. The letters were a reminder to the community that 'their boys' were being looked after by the Camden WVS. This type of publicity was a form of social coercion, and it was a brave person who ignored their overtones (as discussed in Chapter Five). This was a very potent weapon in the fundraising armoury of the WVS as most Camden residents either knew these men personally, or their immediate relatives.

The publication of the letters was also a public acknowledgment of the comforts parcels sent to the men. The letters validated the patriotic work of the WVS women to the remainder of the Camden community. This was also an opportunity for the troops to read their own letters, as well as those from other soldiers, when they received copies of the *Camden News* and *Camden Advertiser* in their parcels.

The letters illustrated the strong emotional attachment to place on the part of the soldiers and there were many references to 'home'. The letters were an appreciation of the service commitment provided by the soldier's female relatives and friends in the WVS. For instance, William (Billy) Rideout, private, of The Oaks, serving with Pioneers Unit in Darwin conveyed his appreciation to Camden WVS

for the very thankful parcel received early this week as it contained the ideal things for wearing in the tropics... Your paper, the *Camden Advertiser* arrives regularly, and I'm pleased to say that I am not cut-off with news of the home town.¹²²

¹¹⁹ *Camden Advertiser*, 30 March 1944.

¹²⁰ *Camden Advertiser*, 27 July 1944.

¹²¹ Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 17.

¹²² *Camden Advertiser*, 7 August 1941.

LAC William Day, RAAF, of Camden

extended his grateful thanks to the Camden WVS... for parcels of comforts mailed to him from his home town. This thoughtful work of the local ladies is greatly appreciated by the recipient.¹²³

One bombardier from Orangeville considered that the parcels were 'much more valuable up here than gold'.¹²⁴ Tom Gall, driver, Arthur Chapman, private, and Tom Guyer, private, who served in Malaya in an infantry transport section, were all thankful for parcels from Camden WVS.¹²⁵ Tom Adams, signalman, from Werombi, serving in Beirut, Syria and who had survived the Crete campaign, sent a message of thanks for his parcel from the Camden WVS.¹²⁶ One servicemen stated that parcels were

a tangible expression of the interest shown by the hometown folk in the welfare of those whose service takes them far from home.¹²⁷

Ralph Larnarch, gunner, an orchardist from Elderslie, wrote to Camden WVS in August, 1941 from Syria and had his letter published in the *Camden News*. The publication of this letter co-incided with the formation of the parcels sub-committee in November. Larnarch said,

I would like to thank you all for those very welcome parcels which you people at home have so kindly sent me.

Already I have received each one, and this is the second one since the action started, so you can all understand my very sincere appreciation when my name was called out on the parcels list to-day. I have written previously thanking you and hope you are in receipt of that letter by now.

Sergt Tom Filby [motor mechanic, John St, Camden] and I get great pleasure reading and discussing the local news from the Camden papers received...

^{123.} *Camden Advertiser*, 28 September 1944.

^{124.} *Camden Advertiser*, 30 March 1944.

^{125.} *Camden Advertiser*, 21 August 1941.

^{126.} *ibid.*

^{127.} *Camden News*, 10 August 1944.

IAC JACK CUMMINS, RAAF, of Menangle, extends his THANKS and appreciation to Menangle WVS Sub-Centre and Camden WVS Centre for the excellent parcels of comforts mailed to him.¹³¹

This was a common pattern across Australia and Camden was typical of this type of effort.

By early 1944 war fatigue was setting in and there were a declining number of volunteers packing parcels. The WVS executive placed a paid advertisement in the *Camden Advertiser* appealing for more help,¹³² and to add clout to the appeal, the *Camden News* began to publish more extracts from letters.¹³³ One unsourced example was placed on the front page of the *Camden News* and stated:

The type of articles in your parcels are always very scarce in these areas, and so very difficult to obtain, and believe me, very much appreciated.

Sincere thanks for the pleasant surprise packet which reached me from your 'bee-hive centre'. Once again the excellent selection of contents were very acceptable, most especially the chocolate and Wrigleys. Please convey my warm appreciation to members of your service.

[For] a fellow parked up here there are really only two things to look forward to, and they are letters and parcels. Believe me when parcels do arrive they sure get rushed. Apart from the contents of these parcels it is the thought, that they convey to chaps up here, and makes them sort of feel they are still in the land of civilisation.

I wish to thank you one and all for the very nice comforts I have received since being in the army. Everything that has been sent to me has been very useful, and I, only one of many, appreciate the excellent work you are all doing.

I wish to sincerely thank you and members of your Service for the parcel and hamper which I received in excellent condition. May I offer my congratulations to the WVS for the grand work you are doing in bringing to our lads those touches of home.¹³⁴

¹³¹. *Camden Advertiser*, 13 January 1944.

¹³². *Camden Advertiser*, 3 February 1944.

¹³³. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 10 February 1944.

¹³⁴. *Camden News*, 23 March 1944.

The purpose of this letter was to increase the number of women helping pack parcels by using a form of emotional 'blackmail'. Evidently it succeeded because the WVS was able to send the same amount of weekly parcels as they had in 1943. This also allowed the WVS to send an increased number of Christmas hampers for 1944.¹³⁵

The language of the letters emphasised Camden's social culture and the construction of gender in Camden. Terms like 'boys' and 'girls', created images of mothers and their sons and daughters in the familial setting, where the dominant role of women was nurturing and caring. The letters support the proposition that these women used their 'agency' within their domestic framework to equate volunteering and patriotism 'to do their bit' for the war effort.

Soldiers not only sent letters as gestures of appreciation. For example, on one occasion, George Malcolm, private, AIF, New Guinea, from Cobbitty made a boat 'from the parts of a crashed plane and mounted on polished black palm'. He sent this souvenir to the Camden WVS

in appreciation of the wonderful work being performed by members of that patriotic organisation in sending parcels to our local district boys.

The WVS decided to dispose of their gift 'as a prize in a competition'.¹³⁶

The First World War 'diggers' of the Camden branch of the RSSAILA also acknowledged the 'wonderful' work of the WVS, and gave the Camden WVS considerable help and financial support.¹³⁷ In July 1944 the Camden RSSAILA stated at its monthly meeting:

We diggers dips our lids to the Camden ladies of the WVS who so constantly and lovingly send those hundreds of ever-welcome comforts parcels to Camden's fighting sons, and we accept it as a privilege that they so kindly

¹³⁵ Parcels for 1943 totalled 1800, 1944, 1800. Christmas hampers for 1943 totalled 312 and 1944, 356.

¹³⁶ *Camden Advertiser*, 3 February 1944.

¹³⁷ The Camden branch of the RSSAILA had been reformed in July 1940 from the Camden Returned Soldier's Fraternity. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940.

allow us to include in each parcel a message with a copy of these monthly notes.¹³⁸

In February 1946 they felt that:

The Women's Voluntary Services have done a meritorious work all through the war and any returned men will vouch for the fact. That the Camden Soldiers received more parcels than anyone else they came in contact with. [sic] Their organisation was perfect and with the help of some of our members we ran the monthly dances for their benefit. The money raised for them was no doubt of great assistance, but seems very small in comparison to the work done by the members of this organisation who week in and week out worked hard at preparing parcels and sending them away.¹³⁹

As far as the League was concerned the service commitment of the WVS stood for patriotic duty, self-sacrifice, steadfastness, self-effacement tinged with a strong emphasis on localism. Camden women had created an atmosphere of support in Camden for 'their boys' on the battlefield.

Further endorsement for the comforts parcels was received in September 1946 at the 'Welcome Home Dinner' for 280 servicemen. The Reverend Kirk, the rector of St Johns Church of England, Camden, and former AIF padre, proposed a 'toast to the ladies' who sent parcels 'throughout the war years, no matter where a local man served in the world'. In reply Major LG Fussell stated on behalf of the Committee that

every woman in this town and district was anxious to do something for you when you were away. You men of Camden can be justly proud of your womenfolk from one end of Australia to the other.¹⁴⁰

These types of comments were not isolated to Camden. The Quirindi WVS built up a 'remarkable record of achievement and untiring devotion to duty... [and] the women never slackened in their long war effort'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ *Camden News*, 20 July 1944.

¹³⁹ *Camden News*, 28 February 1946.

¹⁴⁰ The Welcome Home Committee was Mrs E.H.K. Downes (president), Mrs L.F. de Saxe (treasurer) and Mrs C. Evans (secretary). *Camden Advertiser*, 12 September 1946.

¹⁴¹ Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 17.

Conclusion

The soldier comforts program was the most important wartime activity undertaken by the Camden WVS. Its success was due in part to the experience gathered by Camden women as members of the Red Cross from the First World War, from their Victorianism, their ability to equate domesticity with patriotism, the traditions they developed within Camden's female philanthropy and their parochialism. In this sense soldier comforts were part of Camden's rural ideology.

The story of volunteering surrounding soldier comforts by the women of the Camden WVS was one of 'agency and entitlement'. It had all the key characteristics of Camden's female philanthropy. It brought domesticity into the public arena, and directly linked it to patriotism and the national war effort. Women who excelled at sewing, knitting and cooking had brisk sales of their goods at WVS fetes, fairs, carnivals and street stalls. Their produce and handicrafts were always in strong demand, and these women were good fundraisers for the WVS.¹⁴²

Soldier comforts were a practical expression of the service ideology within female philanthropy through self-sacrifice and dedication to duty. It allowed the WVS women to serve 'their boys' in a time of national crisis. Camden service personnel saw the parcels as a direct link between the local community and themselves. These linkages operated on both an emotional and physical level. The men appreciated the contents of the parcels, but were even more appreciative of the sentiments from 'home'. They illustrated the emotional attachment to place, and how it contributed to the construction of a regional identity. Psychologically, Camden servicemen always remained very close to the Camden area, despite their physical separation from it.

¹⁴²

This type of activity still occurs in Camden today. For example, the craft and produce markets that take place each month in Camden and Cobbitty. Both attract large crowds and have brisk sales. As well, a number of voluntary organisations have street stalls in central Camden on a regular basis. See *Camden Wollondilly Advertiser*, 17 June 2003.

The Women's War Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of New South Wales provided an important role model for the Camden WVS, despite the lukewarm response to the Lord Mayor's Fund in the Camden area, especially the Council. The reaction of the Camden WVS to an attempt of the Lord Mayor's Fund to centralise comforts in New South Wales, indicated the sensitivity of the local community to a perception of interference in local affairs by 'outsiders', and the strength of local parochialism. Parochialism meant that the Lord Mayor's Fund was unable to establish a serious presence in the Camden area and this severely limited its local fundraising ability. This effectively stifled the aims of a national wartime voluntary organisation in the local area.

Parochialism, which was part of Camden's rural ideology, was part of the construction of a regional identity and pervaded Camden's female philanthropy. During the war parochialism was part of the 'wallpaper' that constituted the social culture of the region. Parochialism created a duality within patriotism, one aspect expressed at a local level which favoured locally based wartime interests, and the other, a national expression of patriotism. The boundaries between them could be blurred by local perceptions, and what constituted local interests. The Camden WVS always pursued local interests, and this was supported by the Camden press, sometimes at the expense of national wartime aims. When a conflict arose between either, patriotism at home, meaning Camden, or patriotism for the national war effort, local patriotism took precedence over national wartime aims. This was not isolated to Camden.

Letters from servicemen to family and friends in Camden had been published in the Camden press from the time of the Boer War, and the Second World War was no different. They were an acknowledgment by the Camden community of the importance of the soldiers' effort, and a public expression of patriotism. Some letters contained detail of battles, of daily discomforts, occasionally sightseeing by the tourist soldiers, the excitement of anticipation of coming events, sometimes an expression of homesickness, or a thank you for a parcel or letters from home. The soldiers always eagerly awaited letters, and the local community always read their published replies in the Camden newspapers with interest. Soldiers' letters often wrote of 'home', and their interest in Camden's parochial affairs. When local newspapers were sent to Camden soldiers overseas, they might read their own letters in the local press. Correspondence of this type aided the morale of the troops and

helped fight the periods of boredom. Soldiers' letters also helped the morale of Camden WVS volunteers and encouraged them to continue the tedious job of packing hundreds of comforts for the troops.

To date, the thesis has examined the activities specifically associated with the WVS. Yet its influence was so pervasive that it affected the activities of many other organisations in Camden. The service ethos successfully infiltrated the wider community through the 'agency and entitlement' of the women who volunteered for the WVS, and their sense of self-sacrifice and devotion to duty. The remainder of the thesis will examine the most important of these activities.

CHAPTER SEVEN

'DOING OUR BIT'

THE CAMDEN COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

The wartime success of the WVS in Camden was in no small part due directly to the influence and guidance provided by the CWA at the state and local level. The WVS and CWA were closely aligned in terms of service aims and organisational culture, and the voluntary service ethos of the WVS was a natural extension of volunteering for the CWA. This chapter examines the organisational co-operation between, and the similar voluntary service ethos of, the Camden CWA and WVS, and the assistance camouflage net making provided to the war effort. The discussion will explore the relationship between the Camden WVS and CWA, and how this was played out in the manufacture of camouflage nets and other activities.

A number of the founders of the WVS came from the CWA at a state and local level. The chapter will examine the role of one of these women, Marguerite (Rita) Tucker, the wartime president of the Camden CWA and her relationship with Sibella Macarthur Onslow. The chapter examines the competition for leadership of the voluntary ethic in Camden, and provides an interesting example of how personal rivalries could affect the expression of a service ethos.

In Camden the CWA was senior to the WVS in terms of history, but in many ways the organisations were quite similar. Many local women who were involved with the WVS gained their experience of female philanthropy and committee work from their membership of the CWA. The founders of the CWA in New South Wales (1922), like Grace Munro, the first president, had many similarities with Stella Reading, including her determination, personality, social status and her attitude to femininity and women's service roles.¹ Women like Munro and Tucker were also 'active agents

¹ Grace Munro, was the wife of Hugh Munro, a staunch Presbyterian, who was a member of the Scottish gentry of northern New South Wales, who had extensive land holdings and business interests. Grace Munro has been variously described as 'strong' 'dynamic personality', 'determined', 'energetic', 'dominating and self-centred'. She travelled extensively overseas, including to Great

for social change' in that they were part of a mobilisation of elite rural women who acted in the interests of countrywomen. The CWA was established under the influence of modernity, and undertook political advocacy for rural women, within the constraints of rural ideology. Women from the CWA took an increased public role in the inter-war period and in 1939 were determined not be sidelined in any coming conflict.² Senior CWA and NCW officials were searching for an appropriate women's organisation to be able to cope with any impending conflict. CWA officials subsequently toured the State establishing WVS centres.³ During this time the general membership of the CWA were kept aware of the activities of the British WVS from articles published in the *Countrywoman*.⁴

Like the WVS, the CWA was an organisation that had a strong service ethic, a strong sense of Australian-British nationalism expressed through patriotic jingoism, a high social status, a female membership who were conservative, and centralised control with a decentralised branch network. These characteristics were expressed in the aims and motto of the CWA, which were compatible with the ethos of the WVS.⁵ The close relationship between the CWA and the WVS was acknowledged by the NSW Minister for Emergency Services, Michael Bruxner, at the 1939 Annual Conference of the New South Wales CWA.⁶

One of the principle aims of the CWA movement was the upholding of 'country values', which were an integral part of Camden's rural ideology. The CWA aimed 'to draw together all women, girls and children in order to make country life more attractive'.⁷ This was achieved through localness, 'friendship, family and

Britain. She worked for the Red Cross and St John Ambulance during the First World War. 'She was a member of the first Council of the New England University College and was awarded an MBE for her community service in 1935.' Jillian Oppenheimer, 'Grace Emily Munro', in Nairn and Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 10*, p. 613; Oppenheimer, *Munro's Luck*, pp. 106-109; Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 7.

² Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, p. 40.

³ Ada Beveridge, the New South Wales president of the CWA toured the New South Wales. Details of her rail tour of northern New South Wales were outlined at the 1939 January State Executive Meeting. ML, WVS, MSS 408 1(3), EM 19 January 1939.

⁴ *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 May 1941, p. 24, 1 March 1942, pp. 10-11.

⁵ 'Honour to God
Loyalty to the Throne
Service to the Country
Through Countrywomen
For Countrywomen
By Countrywomen.'

⁶ AANSW, NESCF, 10/42303, 40/80B/495, 1940 WVS AR. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 April 1939.

⁷ CWA of New South Wales, *Annual Report 1940*, p. 5.

neighbourliness'⁸, which were central to the efficient functioning of the Camden's social fabric. Teather maintains that the CWA was embedded in the rural ethos, and this was also true of the Camden WVS.⁹

Although Rita Tucker was not a senior member of the Camden WVS, she indirectly contributed to the success of the Camden WVS through her role as CWA president. She supported the role of the WVS in Camden and did not see it as a direct threat to the continued success of the CWA during the war. She strongly believed in co-operation between women's organisations in Camden, and pursued this aim in the organisation of camouflage netting. To fully understand the relationship between the WVS and CWA in Camden it is therefore necessary to examine her life in a short biography.

Rita Tucker [1894-1961]

Rita Tucker was one of the most important women in Camden's female philanthropy. In many ways she was similar to some of the principal women in the story of the WVS, Reading, Beveridge and Board, Macarthur Onslow and Crookston. She had similar values, demeanour, attitudes and social status.

Tucker gained extensive experience of committee work from her membership of the Camden CWA from its foundation in 1930. She was a Presbyterian, a female philanthropist and a member of the Camden's female elite. One commentator stated that she was

[b]oth generous and capable [and] felt a keen sense of duty to the community - a duty she fulfilled at great cost to her health. She loved people and enjoyed the wide and varied contacts she made in her public capacity. [She possessed] vitality, initiative and [a] forthright character...¹⁰

8.

9. Teather, 'Remote Rural Women's Ideologies, Spaces and Networks', p. 375.

10. Teather, 'The First Rural Women's Network in New South Wales', p. 169.

Camden News, 3 August 1961.

Tucker was 'untiring' and provided 'unselfish service' to the community, which inspired a 'spirit of love and respect' amongst the CWA membership.

Like Reading, she was not 'universally popular', was 'outspoken', 'straight talking', and more importantly possessed the 'courage' and 'drive' that would see her eventually replace Macarthur Onslow as the leader of Camden's female philanthropy.¹¹ Tucker never posed a direct challenge to Macarthur Onslow's leadership during the latter's lifetime. Instead she worked circumspectly, building her own reputation through the CWA. Tucker was well aware of her status as a 'blow in'. A social position that was reinforced by the refusal of Macarthur Onslow or Crookston to ever volunteer for any wartime activities organised by Tucker. The social rivalry between the three women was based on status and the construction of their social identity, and thus their social power, in Camden. Yet Tucker eventually came to exercise considerable social authority in Camden, crossed the boundary between 'local' and 'blow in' and in the post war years developed an extensive social network within female philanthropy which eventually extended to the national stage. However, unlike Macarthur Onslow, Tucker was never able to extend this influence outside Australia.

Tucker was the wife of Rupert Tucker, a farmer and Sydney businessman. She was born in Finley in 1894 and was socialised in Victorian attitudes towards women's service role and femininity at the Goulburn Presbyterian College. Her family moved to Narrabri in 1910, and Tucker worked as a journalist and part-time editor for the *North West Courier* as well as supporting her family's pastoral interests in the area. She married Rupert Tucker, whose family owned *Merila*, a wheat and sheep property, between Narrabri and Boggabri.¹² Tucker was influenced by modernity, and expressed her independence through her paid employment and editorial comment in the *North West Courier*. Tucker was well aware of the changing aspirations and desires of rural women, but also understood the culture associated with rural ideology and how this affected women's 'agency and entitlement' in country areas.

¹¹ *Camden News*, 6 June 1962.

¹² Tucker, Marguerite Stewart Tucker.

In 1929 her family moved to Camden and lived at *The Woodlands*.¹³ She was 'greatly devoted to her home and family'¹⁴ which she expressed in her work for the CWA, and expected the same of others. She had a special interest in the plight of rural women and their families, due to the loss of her first child and the lack of 'support for mothers with infants requiring special attention'.¹⁵ In this respect she had many similarities to Grace Munro.¹⁶ Women like Munro and Tucker were 'active agents for social change' in that they were part of a mobilisation of elite rural women who acted in the interests of countrywomen. These women did not challenge patriarchy in rural areas and worked to maintain 'their solidarity with the struggling family farm', which Gunn maintains, 'gave them their strongest sense of identity'.¹⁷ These women were the strength of the Country Women's Association which took the 'interests' of rural women 'very seriously', created 'parallel power structures' for themselves and lobbied 'on their behalf to the highest levels of state and federal governments'. Women like Tucker used their 'agency' to help 'improve the often appalling living conditions in the bush so that women would be prepared to tolerate them' to stop the 'drift from country to city'.¹⁸ 'Advertisements and articles exhorted rural women to embrace modernity', but Tucker, and other rural elite women like her, recognised the 'loneliness, isolation' and 'meagre financial resources of rural women'¹⁹, and became advocates for them through the CWA.

Tucker would have agreed with Gunn who maintained that rural women upheld Victorian notions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' on the basis that they should 'give their male relatives... their support'.²⁰ Tucker felt that women should occupy a supporting role to their husband's and son's interests. She would have agreed with the sentiments of *The Countrywoman* in 1942 when it stated that:

A woman's part in this heroic struggle is to inspire our men, to cheer and to comfort and to sustain them through good and evil report, until we shall reach the Pisgah's heights of victory and guarantee to our children and our

13. *Camden News*, 3 August 1961.

14. *ibid.*

15. Tucker, Marguerite Stewart Tucker.

16. Munro was 'devastated' with the death of her son of croup when he was one year old. Munro had a long term drive to establish community health centres in rural area in the 1920s. Oppenheimer, *Munro's Luck*, pp. 107-108.

17. Gunn, 'For the Man on the Land', pp. 41-42.

18. Teather, 'Mandate of the Country Women's Association', pp. 74, 78.

19. Gunn, 'For the Man on the Land', p. 41.

20. Gunn, 'For the Man on the Land', p. 42.

children's children that they may pursue honourable lives as free men and women along the paths of peace in the years to come.²¹

Tucker's annual reports for the Camden CWA, which were published in full in the *Camden News*, drew on her experience as a journalist and show the complexity of her character. Her writing possessed a degree of eloquence uncommon in published material in wartime Camden. While Tucker's reports were confident, they were not arrogant and showed an empathy with, and understanding of, the position of the CWA in the community and successfully cultivated support from the wider Camden community.

Tucker had a strong commitment to community service and was a foundation member of the Camden CWA branch and vice-president of the Nepean CWA Group (1931).²² Despite being treated as a 'blow-in' she gained a senior position within Camden's voluntary organisations relatively quickly due to her 'sincerity', 'loyalty', and 'integrity'.²³ She fitted the stereotypical model of the bourgeois and *petit bourgeois* women, outlined by Carmel Shute, who mobilised for the national cause on the homefront during the war.²⁴ She became president of the Camden CWA in August 1939, and remained in it until 1961.²⁵ During the war she was also an active member of the Camden Red Cross, a committee member of the Camden Women's Hospital Auxiliary and the Women's Voluntary Services.

In addition to these community service commitments she was also New South Wales CWA Treasurer (1937), New South Wales CWA vice-president (1947-1951), Wollondilly Group Representative on the New South Wales executive CWA (1946), a member of the Camden Liberal Party branch in the 1950s, holding a number of senior positions, a member of the Camden Presbyterian Ladies Guild from 1940-1961 and the organist at the Camden Presbyterian Church in the early 1940s. She was also actively involved in the Travellers' Aid Society in 1940s and 1950s and was the national president for one term.²⁶

²¹ Mount Pisgah is a mountain ridge of ancient Palestine, north-east of the Dead Sea, and from its summit, Mt Nebo, Moses viewed the Promised Land. [Deut. 3:27]. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales* April 1942, p. 1.

²² *Camden News*, 8 October 1930, 26 October 1933.

²³ *Camden News*, 6 June 1962.

²⁴ Carmel Shute, 'From Balaclavas to Bayonets, Women's Voluntary War Work, 1939-1941', in Windschuttle, *Women, Class and History*, pp. 353-357.

²⁵ *Camden News*, 30 November 1939, 3 August 1961.

²⁶ *Camden News*, 3 August 1961, 6 June 1962; Tucker, Marguerite Stewart Tucker.

During the war Tucker maintained the 'the spirit' of the CWA was 'service for others',²⁷ and she was proud of the work done by the members of the Camden CWA in the service to the community.²⁸ Tucker, would certainly have agreed with Townsend in her history of the New South Wales CWA, who wrote in 1939 'patriotism ranked high amongst CWA members'. The outbreak of war 'promised action, excitement, purpose and drama' and 'King and Country and Onward Christian Soldiers stirred and united the nation'.²⁹ For Tucker wartime volunteering for the CWA was an opportunity for an expression of her patriotic nationalism and her altruism. This was principally, but not solely, expressed in her organisation of camouflage netting in Camden, and a detailed analysis gives an insight into her service commitment, and that of other CWA volunteers.

Camouflage Netting.

Tucker established the CWA netting effort, which was the principal wartime activity of the Camden CWA in 1941. She was always keen to gain the co-operation of the Camden WVS, which she eventually did, but it took a number of attempts, and the entry of Japan into the war, to achieve her goal. Tucker felt that camouflage netting provided an opportunity for Camden women to express their patriotic citizenship and service commitment to support Australia's military effort.

The art of camouflage net making was brought to Australia from Great Britain by William Dakin, who taught net making to a group of women in the Department of Zoology at the University of Sydney.³⁰ The National Defence League,³¹ whose instructors taught members of the CWA³² and WVS,³³ subsequently took it up in

²⁷ *Camden News*, 27 November 1941.

²⁸ *Camden News*, 26 December 1940.

²⁹ Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 87.

³⁰ The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 September 1943; Elias, 'The Organisation of Camouflage in Australia'; Ursula Bygott and K.J. Cable, 'William John Dakin', in Nairn and Serle, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 8, pp. 190-191.

³¹ One of the early netting centres was conducted at 11 O'Connell Street and the first net was sent to the AIF in November 1940. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 September 1943. By November 1941 there were 68 camouflage net-making centres and in the first year the League had made 18,000 nets, and the output in November, according to Miss Kae McDowell, was around 1,000 per week. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 November 1941.

³² The New South Wales CWA Handicraft Committee established a netmaking school in April 1941

Sydney. The British WVS did not make camouflage nets, but did garnish them with coloured fabric, or scrim, on to a net background for the military authorities from 1940.³⁴

The Camden CWA followed the example set by New South Wales CWA and made netting its major wartime priority. The first confirmed netting activity in Camden was conducted by the CWA in May 1941, after the state CWA Handicrafts Committee requested branches to start netting and then issued detailed instructions in the *Countrywoman*.³⁵ Rita Tucker had attended the state CWA conference in April and witnessed netting demonstrations by instructors from the National Defence League. She reported on the conference at the May meeting of the Camden CWA, and arranged classes and stands for net making in the CWA rooms at the following meeting.³⁶ Timber for one netting stand was donated by Rupert Tucker, her husband, and made up by Percy Butler, a local carpenter. Alva George, a local builder, donated two completed stands and Wesley Clifton, a storekeeper, donated practice string.³⁷

In August, the *Camden Advertiser* reported that the CWA netting centre had completed a number of nets and more were being made by a number of female volunteers.³⁸ These women were all members of the Camden CWA, Camden WVS, the Camden Red Cross and the Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary. They illustrated the close social networks between the women's organisations in Camden, which is a constantly recurring theme in this thesis.

Tucker was an enthusiastic supporter of the Camden CWA's netting effort, and constantly encouraged local women to take up the activity. She maintained that the CWA netters were 'very efficient' and very 'interested' in what they did, and that:

at 26 Grosvenor Street, Sydney. During the 1941 CWA Conference in April 300 delegates received netmaking instruction at the school. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 May 1941.

33.

ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), 1944 Annual Report.

34.

Graham, *The Story of WVS*, p. 19; Priestley, *British Women Go To War*, p. 46.

35.

The Countrywoman in New South Wales, 1 May 1941, p. 12, 1 June 1941, p. 16.

36.

Camden CWA, Minutes, 17 June 1940, 20 May 1941.

37.

Camden CWA, Minutes, 17 June 1941, 15 July 1941.

38.

Four brown camouflage nets were completed. An additional five nets were under completion. The members of the group were Mrs Davies, May Downes, Mary Evans, Martha Poole, Una Swan, Rita Tucker. *Camden Advertiser*, 14 August 1941.

The importance [to] this branch of war work cannot be over-estimated. [Camouflage nets] are used so extensively by our troops overseas, and all we can make are urgently needed... We will remember in our prayers the mothers, wives and children of our soldiers who fight and give them our active interest, and sympathetic understanding.³⁹

On her own initiative Tucker learnt how to rope the nets. She brought them from CWA headquarters in Sydney to complete at Camden.⁴⁰ This was significant, because up to November 1941, the state CWA Handicrafts Committee demanded that all roping of nets for the Camden CWA be conducted at the CWA netting centre at David Jones in Sydney.⁴¹ This gave her voluntary effort a degree of exclusivity that agreed with her class identity. Tucker was also asserting the power of locality against the centralised authority of the state CWA executive, yet another reflection of the importance of parochialism in Camden's war effort. Her roping activity was also an extension of the accomplishments that were part of her class identity, particularly as they were conducted in her private sphere. As far as can be ascertained Tucker did not undertake roping at the CWA Rooms. This would support the argument put forward earlier in the thesis that the local gentry did not undertake these type of activities in the larger public working bees and workshops that were the realm of lower class women in Camden. This was below their station in life.

Tucker felt gratified that the helpers at the CWA netting centre were making nets of 'a very high standard', and encouraged other members to join the netting group.⁴² Tucker was encouraged by the chairman of the CWA Handicrafts Committee, Joan Coghlan, who maintained that there was an 'urgent' need for nets by the military because 'they save lives!'.⁴³

The CWA, however, were not the only netters in the town. In May 1941, the Camden WVS established a separate netting centre on the suggestion of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, to supply nets to the National Defence League. On one of the

³⁹. *Camden News*, 27 November 1941.

⁴⁰. *ibid.*

⁴¹. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 June 1941, p. 16. After November, the branches were allowed to do their own roping of camouflage nets.

⁴². *Camden News*, 27 November 1941.

⁴³. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 November 1941, p. 8.

few occasions she attended a WVS meeting, she outlined a variety of war work that could be undertaken by the women, particularly the manufacture of camouflage nets. She suggested forming a netting class,⁴⁴ and had an immediate response from ten volunteers, who were members of the Camden WVS, Camden CWA, the Camden Red Cross and the Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary.⁴⁵ The WVS netting class was also yet another example of how Macarthur Onslow used her social authority to establish a worthwhile patriotic activity, then left it to lower class women to undertake the tedious manual work involved in making nets. Macarthur Onslow would also felt that her age brought with it an additional degree of respect and authority, which gave her the freedom to completely withdraw from the dreary task of making nets.

The class was also joined by two men, Fred Franklin (ironmonger, Camden) and Ted Smith (gardener, Narellan). In July they made two nets, 30ft x 14ft, which were delivered to the National Defence League in Sydney by Albine Terry, the WVS secretary.⁴⁶ Each net, which was destined for England, contained over 20,000 knots and was considered 'excellent work' by the League.⁴⁷ By September, 'good progress' by the netting volunteers instructed by Franklin meant that another fourteen nets had been sent, while another five were ready for despatch.⁴⁸ Franklin, similar to Dakin, was the principal instructor, and was assisted by two other men, Ted Smith and Robert McIntosh, a dairyfarmer of Glenmore, as well as Llewella Davies.⁴⁹ Franklin professed his willingness to continue giving instruction in 'this important work' and thanked all those who helped him.⁵⁰ The contribution of the men to netting was short lived, and there is no other mention made of any Camden men assisting the netting effort at any other time during the war. Yet again, another voluntary activity was left solely to the women (for further examples see Chapter Eight).

The first attempt at creating a joint CWA-WVS netting effort occurred in June 1941, when Rita Tucker addressed the WVS. Despite a directive from the state CWA

⁴⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 15 May 1941.

⁴⁵ The WVS volunteers were Kathleen Clifton, Annie Dickenson, Elsie Gibson, Eleanor Macdonald, Mrs Mackie, Leah McLeod, Harriet Outterside, Martha Poole, Alice Pope, Amy Porter. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 8 May, 1941.

⁴⁶ There are no records to indicate how these men came to join the WVS netting group.

⁴⁷ *Camden Advertiser*, 31 July 1941.

⁴⁸ The nets had included 2 large and 2 small nets, as well 10 khaki nets. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 11 September 1941.

⁴⁹ *Camden News*, 18 September 1941.

⁵⁰ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 11 September 1941.

discouraging joint netting activities by its branches,⁵¹ Tucker explained that the CWA had the necessary string supplied by the Army, and instructors who were prepared to conduct lessons 'in this national work' at the CWA rooms.⁵² Despite Tucker being a member of the WVS, the other women were not impressed enough to take up her offer. Not to be put off Tucker extended an invitation, on behalf of the CWA, to 'all citizens' of Camden who wished 'to assist the War Effort' by attending netting classes on Thursday nights and Friday afternoons in the CWA rooms.⁵³ Despite Tucker's best intentions her approach for a joint effort was doomed as she was directly challenging the social authority of Sibella Macarthur Onslow. The two separate netting efforts represented the different social status and spheres of influence of Tucker and Macarthur Onslow at this stage of the war.

Despite the official separation of the netting efforts, some women, such as Mary Poole and Llewella Davies, volunteered for both organisations. Davies was a member of Camden's elite. She proved the exception that was the rule: despite most of the elite not volunteering for netting, she did. Davies (1901-2000), who never married, was schooled in the Victorian notions of women's service and socialised in Camden's rural ideology. As a youngster she was tutored at home then went to Sydney Church of England Grammar School at Darlinghurst. She was a member of Camden's elite and moved freely with the Macarthur Onslows, Inglises, Downes, McIntoshes and other members of the Camden gentry. Davies was a 'tireless' volunteer who thought it was 'good to work for the community'. She was a member of a number of women's voluntary organisations in Camden, including the Red Cross and Hospital Auxiliary, but not the CWA.⁵⁴ Unlike other members of the elite, she took paid work as a clerk in the office of the *Camden News* and mixed with individuals of all classes on a daily basis. She willingly mixed with, and moved across, class groupings in Camden when other members of the female elite were not prepared to do so. She was the only confirmed member of the Camden elite who was willing to take the manual accomplishments of the gentry into Camden's public arena (of working bees and workshops) during the war.

51. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 May 1941, p. 12.

52. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 12 June 1941.

53. *Camden Advertiser*, 10 July 1941.

54. In the post-war years she was a member of Meals on Wheels, Assistant Secretary of Camden AH&I Society, Treasurer of Camden Garden Club, Research Officer of Camden Historical Society, Secretary of Camden branch of United Australia Party. She was awarded OAM in 1981. Wrigley, Llewella Davies (CHS). *The Land* 14 January 1993, p. 25; John Wrigley, 'Llewella Davies, OAM', *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 February 2000. *Macarthur Chronicle* 15 February 2000; *District Reporter* 11 February 2000; *Camden Wollondilly Advertiser* 17 February 2000; *Macarthur Advertiser* 16 February 2000.

Despite her early disappointment, Tucker did not have to wait long for an opportunity to assert her social authority. The entry of Japan into the war created a new sense of urgency on the Camden homefront,⁵⁵ and resulted in Tucker chairing a joint meeting of all Camden's major female voluntary organisations. It was held at the Camden CWA rooms on Tuesday 18 December 1941 and Grace Moore, the secretary of the WVS, acted as the meeting's secretary. The Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary was represented by its president, Emma Furner, and the CWA Younger Set by Mary Sparkes and Anita Rapley. Apologies were received from Zoe Crookston, Mary Davies, Albine Terry and Hilda Moore,⁵⁶ but notable by her absence from the meeting was Sibella Macarthur Onslow.

After much discussion, the meeting decided to concentrate on making camouflage nets. This meant that CWA and WVS had agreed to combine their separate netting efforts, and the CWA rooms were placed at the disposal of netting workers. The meeting agreed to hold classes for net making at the CWA rooms on Monday and Tuesday nights, and Friday afternoons, so as not to conflict with existing service commitments, particularly the WVS and Red Cross sewing workshops. Volunteers were requested to bring 'a hank of string for practice'. The *Camden News* maintained that 'anyone who possible [sic] can is urged to take this opportunity of rendering national service in a time of crisis'.⁵⁷ The meeting also asked volunteers to fill out forms for the Women's Voluntary National Register and to cooperate with local wardens of the National Emergency Services.⁵⁸

This meeting illustrated the role of the female clique in women's voluntarism in Camden, the emerging importance of Tucker within it and the close-knit nature of

⁵⁵ For instance, the chief warden and Camden mayor, Stan Kelloway, called a public meeting on Tuesday night, 18 December 1941 at the town hall, where had made an urgent appeal for wardens and volunteers for air raid precaution work in the town area. *Camden Advertiser*, 18 December 1941.

⁵⁶ Mary Davies was the treasurer of the Camden Red Cross and the vice-president of the Camden Hospital Women's Auxiliary, Albine Terry, Camden WVS treasurer and Camden Hospital Women's Auxiliary vice-president, and Hilda Moore, the secretary of the Camden Red Cross. *Camden News*, 18 December 1941.

⁵⁷ *Camden News*, 18 December 1941.

⁵⁸ The *Camden Advertiser* maintained that the 'National Emergency Services can provide a job for practically every woman', and forms for the Women's Voluntary National Register were obtainable from Nancy Freestone, the assistant secretary of the WVS, at the town hall library. *Camden Advertiser*, 18 December 1941; *Camden News*, 18 December 1941.

Camden's female voluntarism. Apart from N Rapley and Mary Sparkes, all the women on the committee were members of the Camden Red Cross, the Camden WVS and the Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary. Interestingly only Zoe Crookston and the Moore sisters were not members of the Camden CWA, and this marks a small but important distinction between the CWA and other women's organisations in Camden. Under the influence of modernity the CWA was an agent of social change and was active in the political advocacy for the rights of rural women. This reflected a subtle difference between the Victorianism of Crookston and the Moore sisters, and the influence of modernity on Tucker, Furner, Sparkes and Rapley.⁵⁹

From this point, the manufacture of netting in Camden turned into a CWA affair. Reports on netting production from the centre were sent to the state CWA Handicrafts Committee in Sydney, which co-ordinated the state netting effort for the CWA, and received all the completed nets from the Camden centre. The CWA central netting centre co-ordinated all organisational details, issued instructions to branches on the packing and despatch of nets to Sydney, and acted as a clearinghouse for the Army, which supplied all the twine and collected all the finished nets.⁶⁰

Between February 1941 and February 1944 the Camden netting centre made 578 nets.⁶¹ Una Swan acted as netting secretary and roped all nets, while Mary Poole acted as demonstrator.⁶² The output of nets by the Camden netting centre varied from less than an average of one per week in late 1941, to five per week in January 1942. By March it had reached seven per week, peaking at twenty nets per week in April 1942, with an overall average of five per week. The highest monthly output was eighty nets in March 1942. In the first half of 1942 the centre produced 204 nets and around 400 for the entire year. During 1943 the centre was only able to produce around 100 nets, reflecting the passing of the Japanese threat to Australia, the easing of restrictions on the homefront, and increasing competition the Camden netting

⁵⁹ Another example is GG who never joined the CWA as she felt it was too politically active, too 'academic' and mainly full of 'town women'. Although she was an active member of a number of rural women's organisations, (including patriotic wartime activities). Interview, G.G., Berry, 17 August 2002.

⁶⁰ By January 1942 the handicraft committee was supplying 230 country branches and over 100 suburban circles with twine for making nets. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales* 1 January 1942, p. 7.

⁶¹ Camden CWA, Minutes, 15 February 1944.

⁶² *Camden News*, 3 December 1942.

effort received from the WVS's soldier comforts, which involved a significant number of women from the WVS and CWA. When compared to netting efforts in some other country towns Camden's output was relatively small.⁶³ The Camden centre was kept abreast of statewide netting activity by the *Countrywoman*, which issued monthly tallies of nets supplied to the Sydney CWA depot by netting centres, as well as reporting other related, netting information.⁶⁴

The CWA netting centre always relied on a small but dedicated band of volunteers, and Swan always maintained that there was a constant need for volunteers. She often appealed for volunteers at the CWA meetings and in the Camden press. This shortage was made worse in August 1941 when some members of the CWA felt that they were unable to attend the centre due to petrol rationing.⁶⁵ In January 1942 she asked for a roster, so that there could be someone working on netting each day.⁶⁶ After requests for extra nets by the CWA State Handicrafts Committee, Swan maintained that more workers were needed to enable five nets per week to sent in to Sydney.⁶⁷ Subsequently, the Camden CWA placed an article in the *Camden News* and *Campbelltown News* outlining the need for additional help.⁶⁸ By February, Swan reported that there 'quite a lot of helpers were coming along to the circle' each week.⁶⁹ Swan was given authority to acquire a board for roping the net, another stand and more hooks to increase the netting output.⁷⁰ Tucker ensured that adequate netting twine was sent from Sydney, and a gauge for accurately setting the size of squares in the nets was donated to the Camden netting centre.⁷¹

Problems posed by an inadequate number of volunteers persisted. In June 1942 the *Camden News* reported that there had been a decline in output in 'the past few

^{63.} For example, a comparison between Camden and Nowra (their respective populations were 2374 and 2578, and the main industry of both areas was dairying) netting centres. The Nowra netting centre (a joint effort between Nowra CWA and Red Cross) made 1,320 nets in the 2½ years that their centre was operational up to December 1943. Up to the end of 1942 the Nowra centre had made 875 nets, while Camden's centre had manufactured 489 nets. Camden netting centre was never able to sustain the same effort as Nowra. Nowra CWA, Minutes, August 1941 - December 1943. The Quirindi CWA made 14 camouflage nets in one week in March 1942 and by the end of the war had sent away 565 nets. Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 16.

^{64.} For example, *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 May 1941, p. 12.

^{65.} Camden CWA, Minutes, 19 August 1941.

^{66.} Camden CWA, Minutes, 30 January 1942.

^{67.} *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 January 1942, 10.

^{68.} *Camden News*, 19 February 1942; *Campbelltown News*, 20 February 1942.

^{69.} Camden CWA, Minutes, 17 February 1942.

^{70.} *ibid.*

^{71.} *Camden News*, 19 February 1942.

weeks'. Swan appealed for the effort to continue 'because the demand for these nets is increasing'.⁷² Tucker stressed the 'value of these nets to our troops' and appealed for more volunteers to replace those who had left the district. She maintained:

May we, by our daily lives, so far preserves for us [sic], show ourselves worthy of their great sacrifice, and those who mourn will feel they have not died in vain.⁷³

Despite a statewide shortage of volunteers in 1943,⁷⁴ the *Camden News* reported that 'several workers' were still making nets at the CWA rooms on Tuesday afternoons and Friday nights.⁷⁵ Swan maintained that she 'would like to have more netters'⁷⁶ as the New South Wales CWA constantly reported that the Army had shortages of nets.⁷⁷

Despite the constant shortages of volunteers, Tucker resisted using the methods adopted by the Camden WVS and the Red Cross to recruit volunteers. She was reluctant to allow the Camden CWA to publish extracts of soldier's letters in the local press, even though this may have helped her cause. The Camden CWA had a ready source of this material in the CWA's monthly journal, the *Countrywoman*.⁷⁸

72. *Camden News*, 18 June 1942.

73. *Camden News*, 3 December 1942.

74. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 April 1943, p. 14.

75. *Camden News*, 15 April 1943.

76. Camden CWA, Minutes, 16 February 1943.

77. *ibid.*

78. For example Driver Graham White, 2nd Battery, Australian Medium Regiment, RAA AIF, Abroad, sent a letter in July 1942 which said:

'I believe you people in Aussie are doing a good job, especially the netting job you are on, and mother, you can tell the people that they are worth more than their weight in gold, they are absolutely a God-send, but we really should have more of them. If the women of Australia only knew what they mean to us they would give up their pleasure and housework and go on making nets and more nets.'

The Countrywoman in New South Wales, 31 December 1941.

Other examples of this type of material include such items as a poem from L/Sgt R.A. Wickens, who was abroad, called 'Just Camouflaging Nets', which stated in part:

'Now, my Mum looked at it this way
She'd tons of time for thought
And with us all so far away,
What price the memories brought
Though I'm Mum's son, a Digger, too,
Now she's no time to fret,
Just plays her role, God bless her soul,
a'Camouflaging nets.'

The Countrywoman in New South Wales, 1 July 1942, p. 7.

A Moree member supplied a poem called 'Camouflage Nets', which said in part:

'So workers who toil by the strong wooden frames

Tucker relied on general stories of the branches netting effort and small netting notices in the *Camden News* and *Camden Advertiser*, and even these items were much less strident than those used by either the WVS, or Red Cross, in pursuing their wartime goals. One of the consequences of this reticence was the lower priority netting received from volunteers amongst the many wartime activities that occurred in Camden. As a member of both the WVS and Red Cross, Tucker deferred to their activities, which she felt were a greater wartime priority.

Una Swan never reported the time taken to complete a net by the volunteers at the Camden netting centre, but Pennay in his study of Albury reports that Mrs Burrows of the Albury CWA, who supervised netting, maintained that it took about fifty-two hours of work to complete one net.⁷⁹ McKernan quotes an estimate of eight hours needed to complete a net, a figure supplied by the women from the National Defence League (Women's Auxiliary), who made around 265,000 nets in their 119 centres.⁸⁰ Barbara Cullen, the state CWA president in 1953, remembered her family averaging one net a day, which took between twelve and fifteen hours.⁸¹ The Camden netting centre made both 'large' and 'small' nets,⁸² and using a conservative estimate of fifteen hours to complete a net, this effort amounted to 8670 hours of effort, worth around £1127 to the Army.⁸³ The New South Wales executive of the CWA always made a point of regularly highlighting the value of CWA work by detailing netting activity to the military effort through the pages of the *Countrywoman*. In 1943 *The Countrywoman* estimated that the CWA netting effort had saved the Army £289,000 for the 148,000 nets (£1/19/- per net) that had been supplied by voluntary labour.⁸⁴

The Camden netters were always concerned that their volunteers should maintain a high standard of work. The *Countrywoman*, which gave detailed instruction on netting, was circulated amongst the Camden netters.⁸⁵ The CWA Handicrafts

If you're weary of needle and string
Remember the men who are fighting for you,
And the safety the nets you make bring.'

⁷⁹ From a Moree member. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 December 1941, p. 8.

⁸⁰ Pennay, *On the Home Front*, p. 22.

⁸¹ Hasluck papers, Australian War Memorial Library, cited in McKernan, *All In!*, p. 236, n. 64.

⁸² Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 125.

⁸³ These would have been the 24ft x 24ft, and 14ft x 14ft nets respectively.

⁸⁴ *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 January 1943, 7.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

For example, the first article appeared May 1941, and suggested how CWA branches should organise individual netting centres. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 May 1941, p. 12.

Committee issued instructions that it expected a 'very high standard' from netters, and maintained that a pupil should not be allowed to work on the nets proper until they had three lessons of two and half hours each.⁸⁶ Robert McIntosh donated a small stand for beginners to learn netting,⁸⁷ and Una Swan reported that the netting group complied with all training requests from Sydney and all volunteers kept 'up their standard' of netting.⁸⁸

The Camden netting centre was assisted by sub-branches at Campbelltown and Narellan, which were established after the joint CWA-WVS meeting in December 1941. These sub-branches provided a small but steady stream of nets to add to the Camden effort.⁸⁹ By February the *Campbelltown News* reported that the 'sub-centres' were providing '24 nets a month' to the 'urgent' appeals from the military authorities for nets.⁹⁰ In June, Una Swan reported that thirty-four nets had been sent from Campbelltown, and Narellan was working well.⁹¹ By late 1942 'Campbelltown was [still] keeping our end up' according to Swan,⁹² and in March 1943 supplied sixteen nets.⁹³ The Narellan netting effort was under the leadership of Eliza Byrne, who was the wife of the local publican at Narellan, and president of the Narellan Red Cross.⁹⁴

Camden was the largest netting centre in the area, and the only CWA branch, and following directives from the CWA Handicrafts Committee, distributed netting twine to the smaller netting centres at Campbelltown, Narellan and Buxton.⁹⁵ Apart from Buxton, these smaller centres were important because they operated in

The second article, 'Camouflage Nets - How to Make' gave detail sketches on knots and netting stands and was supplied by the National Defence League netting centre at the University of Sydney. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 June 1941, p. 16. The front page of the September *Countrywoman* was a photograph of the Armidale netting centre at Armidale's Teachers' Training College (a joint effort between the students, Armidale CWA and members of the Armidale Arts and Crafts Club). *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 September 1941, cover & p. 7. Further detailed instruction came in October in 'Tips for Good Netting'. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 October 1941, pp. 6-7, 18-19.

⁸⁶ *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 January 1942, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Camden CWA, Minutes, 17 February 1942.

⁸⁸ Camden CWA, Minutes, 19 May 1942.

⁸⁹ *Camden News*, 3 December 1942.

⁹⁰ *Campbelltown News* 20 February 1942.

⁹¹ Camden CWA, Minutes, 16 June 1942.

⁹² Camden CWA, Minutes, 15 December 1942.

⁹³ Camden CWA, Minutes, 16 March 1943.

⁹⁴ Camden CWA, Minutes, 16 June 1942.

⁹⁵ *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 August 1942, p. 10, 1 September 1942, p. 10. The Campbelltown branch of the CWA was not established until 1954. *Macarthur Chronicle*, 11 July 2000.

localities where there were no established CWA branches and gave local women an opportunity to express their patriotic citizenship by supporting the war effort.

The enthusiasm in Camden for netting waned and in 1943 the output was 'negligible' according to Tucker, but Swan made 'herself responsible to complete all unfinished nets by the end of the year'.⁹⁶ The winding down of netting activity started in September 1943,⁹⁷ but Swan reported at the October CWA meeting that 'no official word had been received to cease making nets'.⁹⁸ In October, Francis Forde, the Minister for the Army announced the end of net making, which sent 'shock waves' throughout the CWA.⁹⁹ The Camden netting centre eventually closed in February 1944, after operating for over two and half years, with Una Swan finishing the last of the nets.¹⁰⁰

With the cessation of netting the CWA Handicrafts Committee looked for alternative ways to hold the netting groups together. The Army requested the CWA assist in the re-conditioning of Army clothing,¹⁰¹ and in November 1943, the Camden CWA received such a request from the Army at Liverpool. At the following meeting the members moved that they would 'think over the matter' and discuss it at the December meeting.¹⁰² By December it was reported that 'nothing definite had been arranged with reference to sewing for [the] Army at Liverpool, but expect to hear early from them in the new year'.¹⁰³ Rita Tucker noted that the 'matter... must be discussed thoroughly at a branch meeting, when it will be seen if it is possible to rise to the occasion'.¹⁰⁴ There was no further action on this matter reported in the annual reports or the minutes of the Camden CWA. Presumably the women felt it was not worthwhile pursuing the project because of war weariness and the desire by the branch members to get on with their post-war priorities. The New South Wales WVS's annual report for 1945 stated that reconditioning military clothing 'did not attract the same enthusiasm [as netting]'.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶ *Camden News*, 2 December 1943.

⁹⁷ Dorothy Inglis of the State Handicrafts Committee advised branches 'to complete all on hand as quickly as possible'. *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 September 1943, p. 9.

⁹⁸ Camden CWA, Minutes, 19 October 1943.

⁹⁹ Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁰ The minutes of the Camden CWA stated that the centre operated from September 1941 to February 1943. Camden CWA, Minutes, 15 February 1944.

¹⁰¹ CWA of New South Wales, *Twenty-second Annual Report 1944*, pp. 44-45.

¹⁰² Camden CWA, Minutes, 16 November 1943.

¹⁰³ Camden CWA, Minutes, 21 December 1943.

¹⁰⁴ *Camden News*, 2 December 1943.

¹⁰⁵ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), 1944 Annual Report.

Netting was an overwhelmingly female affair, and the women rarely, if ever, received public acclamation for their effort because of the absence of the elite (similar to WVS-Red Cross sewing party discussed in Chapter Five). Apart from Rita Tucker it was rare for Camden's female elite to volunteer for netting. An examination of the motivation of a number of women indicates that they had a strong patriotic desire to assist the war effort, as well finding companionship and camaraderie amongst their fellow netters.

ER, for example, remembered volunteering for duty at the Camden netting centre when she was 15 years old. She recalled that the netting effort was organised and supervised by Rita Tucker. She stated that she had left school and attended the centre on a weekly basis with a group of friends. She maintains that Camden men 'were away and we were doing our bit' for the war effort. She emphatically states that 'they [Camden women] all had to do something to help our boys' and they took up netting as part of their civic and patriotic duty. ER reported that, for her, netting was not hard work and she enjoyed going with her friends. She maintains that they worked 'long hours' and 'didn't really worry about it'.¹⁰⁶

Women who made nets in other locations have expressed similar sentiments. IT recalls that netting was 'hard work', but 'she went with her friends, and it was her bit for the war effort'. She helped at a netting circle located above a shop in Campsie, attending on a Wednesday nights after work, but could not recall who organised it. She maintains that at around eighteen years of age, 'there was not much else to do' and 'all the boys 'were either too old or too young'.¹⁰⁷ Another netter, KH worked during the day as a clerk and attended the Nowra netting centre after work at the age of eighteen. The Nowra centre was located above a shop in the main street and she considered that netting was her 'patriotic duty'.¹⁰⁸ Another Nowra netter, GG, lived at home on a dairy farm. In 1942, when she was seventeen years old, she went with a friend to the Nowra netting centre for 'a couple of hours' a week on a Tuesday

^{106.} Interview, E.R., Camden, 19 March 1999.

^{107.} Mrs I.T. was initially a clerk, but the Manpower authorities moved her to a factory where she worked as a machinist sewing uniforms. In addition to netting, she volunteered for duty at a canteen on Central Railway Station in Sydney on Saturdays, making cups of tea and sandwiches for the soldiers. Interview, I.T., Camden, 10 February 1999.

^{108.} Interview, K.H., Nowra, 6 February 1999.

afternoon. She would catch the train from Berry to Nowra, attend classes at Nowra Technical College, then attend netting where there would be between '10-15 other women'. She recalls that as the netters had 'to be careful making [the] knots', she found them 'hard and difficult to make... as they had to be stable and couldn't move'. In hindsight, she 'didn't think [that she] ever got very proficient at it', but she still went along 'to help the war effort, for company and a chat'.¹⁰⁹ Rita, a volunteer at the Armidale Teacher's College netting centre in 1941, maintained that 'we were expected to do our bit for the war effort - it all helped'.¹¹⁰ The patriotic efforts of all of these women were examples of Australian wartime feminine citizenship. Under the influence of modernity these young women willingly took up an opportunity to independently undertake voluntary war work.

Women from the upper-middle class allowed their paid staff to participate in the netting effort. Barbara Cullen, who later became state CWA president, 'remembered her family averaging one net a day. She worked in the mornings on the nets, with her governess during some part of the afternoon and with her husband at night'. One woman recalled that 'as she netted, she could see the soldiers in the jungles of New Guinea and could imagine the nets in use'.¹¹¹

Some authors have drawn a sharp correlation between domesticity and net making. Townsend, in her history of the New South Wales CWA, maintains that at the outbreak of the war

the arts of peace became the arts of war, with an almost indecent speed. The craft skills women had learnt as part of home-making, finding inner peace and self-expression, became geared to making camouflage nets for the men in New Guinea.¹¹²

These comments drew a direct link between domesticity, patriotism and rural ideology. These sentiments were not restricted to New South Wales and appeared in

¹⁰⁹ She also kept the house for her father and two brothers, as her mother had died. Interview, G.G., Berry, 6 March 1999.

¹¹⁰ Rita, Interview with John Cecil, 'When the War Came To Australia' (radio program), 2BL, Sydney, 11 November 2000. As already noted a photograph of the netting centre was on the cover of *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 September 1941.

¹¹¹ Cullen was the New South Wales CWA President from 1953-1956. Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 125.

¹¹² Townsend, *Serving the Country*, p. 87.

a contemporary British publication by Priestley in 1942. A colour plate showed three middle age women from the British WVS garnishing camouflage netting with strips of coloured fabric. He claimed that:

they are happily absorbed in their task, which is of considerable importance in our scheme of defence, and they seem to give it a cosy domestic air, as if it were rug-making on a rather large scale'.¹¹³

Other Wartime Service Activities of Camden CWA

Under Tucker's leadership the Camden CWA also undertook other activities, which were similar in many respects to the generalised comforts programme of the Camden WVS.

Following the call of Ada Beveridge, the state president of the CWA, to assist servicemen,¹¹⁴ Rita Tucker entertained a Norwegian merchant captain sent to her by CWA head office for a country holiday. As well, during 1942 she found accommodation amongst local friends for sixteen Dutch nurses from a hospital ship

but owing to the ship being sent to sea, only two nurses in need of a small break were able to avail themselves of hospitality most generously offered.¹¹⁵

Tucker wanted to use the CWA Centre in Camden as weekend hostel for servicewomen, as it had all the necessary equipment. She had tea with the AWAS at Narellan Military Camp at the invitation of the Commanding Officer. The servicewomen felt that a weekend hostel might not be used very often, but would appreciate 'the hospitality of members' own homes'.

^{113.} Priestley, *British Women Go To War*, p. 44, Colour plate 37.

^{114.} She instructed branches to '...supply comforts to the men...' of any Militia in their districts. Find out if the women and children left behind by those who are in camp need assistance; if so, help them; try and provide recreation and entertainment for the leisure hours of the en'. Ada Beveridge, 'State President's Message, A Guide for Members During War Time', *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 November 1939, pp. 1-2.

^{115.} *Camden News*, 3 December 1942.

It was pointed out that so many of the girls from other States have not been home for a year, and would give a great deal to know the comforts of a home, if only for one or two days. The atmosphere and comfort of a home would mean a great deal to them.¹¹⁶

Tucker noted that two Camden CWA members had agreed to provide home comfort for these women.¹¹⁷ As well the Camden CWA gave the Camden WVS a £5 contribution to the WVS Mobile Canteen appeal in 1941.¹¹⁸

Tucker, like Reading, saw the welfare of the family and motherhood as patriotic necessity and hence a wartime priority, and proceeded to work for the establishment of a baby health centre in Camden.¹¹⁹ Ada Beveridge maintained that:

The work we are doing as an Association is a national work, and is even more necessary to-day than in peace time, for, both during the duration of the war and after it is over, the nation and the Empire will need strong women and children to build up the race and to take the place of those who have fallen...

Please remember to look after our women and children, that is just as important as looking after our soldiers. We must help keep up the fitness of the race...¹²⁰

Many WVS members attended the official opening of the baby health centre in 1940 and contributed to the fundraising through their CWA membership. At the opening of the centre Rita Tucker claimed that the baby health centres was 'purely a national work [along with] other patriotic needs... for the care of mothers and young babies which must be the first consideration of the country'.¹²¹ Clarice Faithfull Anderson, a member of the female gentry, supported Tucker's views and stated:

^{116.} *Camden News*, 2 December 1943.

^{117.} *ibid.*

^{118.} *Camden News*, 3 July 1941.

^{119.} Despite Camden having four doctors, and three midwives who had private maternity hospitals, there was no group specifically interested in postnatal care of children and their mothers.

^{120.} Ada Beveridge, 'State President's Message, A Guide for Members During War Time', *The Countrywoman in New South Wales*, 1 November 1939, p. 1.

^{121.} *Camden News*, 19 May 1938. Mrs Faithfull Anderson donated £100 towards the total cost of the centre of £600, 106 Camden residents subscribed £1 each, and the CWA Younger Set donated £50. The remainder of the cost was raised by a loan of £350 personally guaranteed by '14 gentlemen' of Camden. *Camden News*, 8 February 1940.

It is to these babies that we have to entrust the future of Australia. What we may have to face during the immediate future - how many months or years of war - we do not know. It may come far nearer that it did in 1914-18. But the more we stand fast behind our soldiers and our Red Cross at the front, the more we must also remember young Australia growing up. Let us give them as healthy a foundation both in body and in mind as it is possible to have, so that they will be able to shoulder the responsibility of rebuilding the world of the future.¹²²

Clarice Faithfull-Anderson also made the point that baby health centres in New South Wales had reduced child mortality by half,¹²³ and therefore increased national efficiency. Jeff Bate, MLA, the member for Wollondilly, supported these sentiments and said

he doubted whether the majority of people fully realised the importance of the work and what a big job the CWA is doing for the country... Babies were the best asset of Australia [and] he congratulated the Camden branch of the Country Women's Association on the erection of this Baby Health Centre, and upon the great national work they are undertaking.¹²⁴

The Organisational Culture of CWA

Rita Tucker also assisted the success of the Camden WVS by encouraging inter-organisational co-operation between the CWA, and other women's organisations in Camden. She observed that CWA members had

assisted on various stalls at the WVS carnival in October [1943], but they did not work as a separate unit, but as members of the WVS. It is most inspiring to think that all associations work in such a harmonious way - it is realised that in co-operation lies the secret of success.¹²⁵

¹²² *Camden News*, 19 May 1938, 8 February 1940.

¹²³ *Camden News*, 8 February 1940.

¹²⁴ *Camden News*, 19 May 1938, 8 February 1940.

¹²⁵ *Camden News*, 2 December 1943.

This was not a unique event. A high level of co-operation was achieved between the WVS and CWA on other occasions,¹²⁶ and Tucker noted that the Camden CWA worked 'very happily and amicably with other organisations in the town'.¹²⁷ The level of co-operation in Camden was acknowledged by Beatrice Tildesley, the secretary of the New South Wales WVS, and has been referred to earlier in the thesis. She drew attention to the 'harmonious working' relationships 'between WVS and other patriotic bodies [in Camden] and the 'high regard' for the WVS in the town'.¹²⁸ This was supported by Jessie Willis, the New South Wales WVS president, who reported on the active co-operation between the WVS, the CWA and other women's organisations, in her yearly report in 1944.¹²⁹

As noted earlier, Camden was only one of three locations in New South Wales that were identified by the state executive of the WVS as having a high level of co-operation between the WVS, CWA, Red Cross, VAD and other organisations.¹³⁰ The co-operation between these organisations was a natural part of Camden's social structure and could be partly attributed to the executive positions held by CWA members in 'other organisations'.¹³¹ In addition, the relatively small size of the Camden CWA, compared to other women's organisations in Camden, meant that the Association could never openly challenge their social position. In 1939 the CWA membership was eighty-three while the Camden Red Cross had a membership of 412 and the Hospital Auxiliary 142. In 1943 CWA membership dropped to fifty and then recovered by 1945 to seventy-three.¹³² Apart from this, under Tucker's leadership the CWA was never perceived as a threat to the status of the Red Cross or the WVS. She was well aware of the sensitivities and egos of other female members of the elite and never attempted to raise the social profile of the CWA to challenge the wartime pre-eminence of the WVS or Red Cross. At the end of 1941 Tucker stated:

¹²⁶ For instance, a combined street stall in Camden Friday 25 February 1944 for Merchant Navy Relief Fund and Russian Medical Aid and Comforts. *Camden News*, 24 February 1944.

¹²⁷ *Camden News*, 27 November 1941.

¹²⁸ ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), 1945 Annual Report.

¹²⁹ Those women's organisations present at the New South Wales WVS annual general meeting were the CWA, the Australian Comforts Fund, Red Cross, Young Women's Christian Association, and the National Council of Women. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), Presidential Report, 5th Annual General Meeting, 27 April 1944.

¹³⁰ As already noted the three centre were Camden, Parramatta and Penrith. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 2(3), Clipping Book, 22 March 1939.

¹³¹ *Camden News*, 27 November 1941.

¹³² *Camden News*, 30 November 1939, 27 November 1941, 20 December 1945; Camden CWA, Minutes, 24 November 1942, 16 November 1943.

The time has come for greater understanding between the people of the community. It is time we learned to relegate the unimportant things of life. Friendship, sympathy, tolerance and understanding one with the other will help to bring us closer together and make easier the difficulties which are before us, and lighten the days ahead.

God grant that before the close of another year we will have achieved victory, and an honourable, just and lasting peace will have come to the world, and until that day we will do our duty as we see it and we will carry on.¹³³

Tucker's activities in this respect hint at the multi-dimensional nature of the women's service ideology, the nuances at work within it and how all these factors affected the WVS, CWA and Red Cross.

Another contributing factor to the high level of co-operation between the Camden CWA, the WVS and other organisations was the overlapping membership between them. During the war around 32 per cent of the CWA membership were members of the WVS, 56 per cent were members of the Camden Red Cross and 43 per cent were members of the Hospital Auxiliary. Amongst the CWA membership 18 per cent were members of all four organisations, 47 per cent were members of at least three, 68 per cent were members of at least two and 32 per cent were members of the CWA only. Conversely, 31 per cent of the Camden WVS membership were members of the Camden CWA, while 67 per cent were members of the Hospital Auxiliary and 73 per cent were members of the Camden Red Cross. The Camden CWA, WVS, Red Cross and Hospital Auxiliary all exhibited similar social characteristics and were able, by their exclusiveness, cross-membership, horizontal networks, and their role within Camden's ruling clique, to effectively control the war effort by Camden women.

Tucker encouraged the religious and social exclusiveness of the membership of the CWA and indirectly that of the WVS. Similar to the WVS, 80 per cent of the membership of the CWA was Protestant, while the Red Cross had 90 per cent Protestant membership.¹³⁴ Camden's female elite conveniently ignored this exclusiveness if women in Camden possessed the appropriate social rank. One such

¹³³.

¹³⁴ *Camden News*, 27 November 1941; Camden CWA, Minutes, 18 November 1941.

For details of Red Cross see Willis, *War and Community*, pp. 72-77.

person was Eliza Byrne, who was referred to earlier in this chapter. She was Catholic, but the wife of the owner of the Queen Arms Hotel in Narellan and therefore a person of influence in the Camden area. Byrne was vice-president of the Camden CWA (1940-1945), president of the Narellan Red Cross (1940-1942) and a member of the Hospital Auxiliary. Her rank is quite important because the Catholic membership of the CWA, Red Cross and WVS was well below the 25 per cent level, which was the Catholic proportion of the district's population.

Tucker encouraged the daughters of CWA members to become involved in the CWA Younger Set. This was similar to the role taken by Sibella Macarthur Onslow with respect to Camden's other youth organisations, such as the Girl Guides, the Junior Red Cross (which is briefly discussed in Chapter Five) and the Boy Scouts. Like the CWA, the members of the Younger Set were influenced by modernity, yet as daughters of the CWA women, they were schooled in the Victorianism associated with women's service role. Tucker maintained that:

We [the Camden CWA] also have a feeling of security in the knowledge that these young women, so well endured [sic] with the ideal of service for others, can carry on our work when we must needs lay the burden down.¹³⁵

Tucker appears to have been quite successful as a number of members of the Younger Set were members of the Camden WVS, the Camden Red Cross and the Camden Voluntary Aid Detachment. At the same time the women from the CWA were well aware of their daughter's desires and aspirations and gave them the freedom to explore their own sexuality. The war provided an opportunity for some of the women from the Younger Set to express their independence through allowable flirting with servicemen from the surrounding military bases. Members of the Younger Set invited airmen from the RAAF Base at Camden aerodrome to unsupervised dances at the CWA Rooms, but so as not to compromise their femininity, if the airmen 'brought any alcohol they would have been barred, or if they arrived drunk they weren't allowed in'. The women received reciprocal invitations to dances at the aerodrome, and would 'quite often... walk back' to town. If the women were so inclined the airmen provided alcohol, and one commented that the 'NCO dances... were a bit rowdy', while those organised by the officer's and sergeant's mess were more orderly. This type of activity was more common at the end of the war with the decline in tensions, the non-combatant nature of military

¹³⁵

Camden News, 26 December 1940.

duties at the aerodrome, and particularly, the arrival of the RAF airmen (who are discussed in Chapter Nine). Members of the CWA Younger Set also joined the VAD (which is discussed in Chapter Five), the Volunteer Air Observer Corps and the National Emergency Services.¹³⁶ As mentioned earlier, this was not isolated to Camden (see Chapter Six).

This did not stop members of the Younger Set undertaking the more traditional service commitment of sewing. From June 1940 the Younger Set had 'accepted the responsibility of... sewing and repairing of clothing for the individual trainees' at the RAAF Central Flying School at the aerodrome. Under the arrangements

a parcel of clothing [was] delivered weekly from the Flying School to the CWA Rest Room where the young ladies will meet, and do their work, seeing that all articles, including socks and underwear, are returned to camp in good order.

George Sidman noted in the *Camden News* that the women volunteered their time 'willingly', which he thought was 'wonderful'.¹³⁷

Tucker was not unique, and similar women existed in other parts of rural New South Wales. For example Lurline McFadden of Young held senior positions in the Young CWA, WVS, Red Cross, Hospital Auxiliary, Chamber of Commerce, Returned Soldier's Ladies Auxiliary, amongst a variety of other organisations. She was Protestant, upper-middle class, her husband was a bank manager and received a high degree of public acclamation for her philanthropy.¹³⁸ She was a contemporary of Tucker, Crookston, Beveridge, Board and Reading.

Conclusion

Those members from the Camden CWA, who joined the WVS, like Rita Tucker, directly assisted the success and achievements of the Camden WVS. The voluntary

¹³⁶ Interview, B.K. and E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993.

¹³⁷ *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

¹³⁸ *Young Chronicle*, 31 August 1945 in Clipping Book, Lurline McFadden, Ferguson-Webb Collection, Wollongong.

service ethos of the WVS was a natural extension of volunteering for the New South Wales CWA. Both organisations had a strong sense of Britishness, high social status, a conservative female membership and centralised control with a decentralised branch network. The CWA, like the Camden WVS, upheld 'country values' which were an integral part of Camden's rural ideology. The state-based founders of the WVS were CWA officials who had taken an increased public role in the inter-war period and by 1939 were determined not be sidelined in any coming conflict. They encouraged women throughout New South Wales, including Camden, to join the WVS in the early part of the war. The WVS, along with the activities of the CWA, provided an opportunity for these women to express their 'agency and entitlement' through patriotic citizenship and wartime voluntary service. Given the similarities between the organisations it was little wonder there was a high level of co-operation between the WVS and CWA in Camden.

Tucker gained her experience of committee work from the CWA, and like Beveridge and Board, was a strong, determined and energetic woman who was a good organiser. These women were Victorian, nationalist, patriotic, Protestant and upper-middle class and they developed 'parallel paths' for themselves. They were also influenced by the aspirations and desires of woman through modernity, and expressed it through political advocacy for rural women.

Under Tucker's leadership the Camden CWA encouraged the dissemination of the women's service ideology and assisted its success in wartime Camden. The CWA deferred to the WVS on all matters related to their program of activities. Despite the similarities between the WVS and the CWA, petty parochialism and self-interest were sufficiently strong in the early part of the war, to ensure that both organisations set up competing netting centres. It took the entry of Japan into the war to overcome the entrenched interests surrounding Sibella Macarthur Onslow and the WVS netting group. Yet Tucker vigorously pursued the manufacture of camouflage nets in Camden, and was not satisfied until it became a joint WVS-CWA activity. Netting became the principal wartime activity of the Camden CWA based on the statewide netting effort of the New South Wales CWA. The netting centre provided Tucker with an opportunity to exert her social authority in the fading days of the Macarthur Onslow epoch, and provided the base for her post-war supremacy in Camden's female philanthropy. Netting provided a significant material contribution to the war

effort in terms of voluntary labour and the cost of netting, thus saving the Army a considerable amount of money.

Women undertook netting for a variety of reasons, but overall it was an expression of their 'agency' where they considered their volunteering was directly related to patriotism by undertaking an activity that assisted 'their boys'. As well, the Camden and New South Wales CWA regarded motherhood as a patriotic necessity, similar to Reading, and considered the establishment of the baby health centres as a wartime priority based on the future protection of the British race. The CWA, like the WVS, also conducted a comforts programme for service personnel as an extension of their service ethos.

CHAPTER EIGHT

'MEN'S BUSINESS'

THE SOLDIERS' RECREATION ROOM THE SOLDIER'S FAREWELLS ARTHUR GIBSON AND THE *CAMDEN ADVERTISER*

To date, this thesis has examined the influences of the service ethos on the women's war work. This chapter and the next examine aspects of Camden's male voluntarism and the part the service ethos played in assisting and influencing the men's war work. In doing so, it also demonstrates the importance of gender expectations and social status in Camden's patriotic activities.

From the turn of the century most male voluntarism in Camden was related to agriculture, sport, politics, religion or civil defence. Consistent with Camden's rural ideology and patriarchy, male voluntarism was part of Camden's public sphere, and like female philanthropy, was dominated by Camden's elite. During the Boer War and the First World War one of the principal efforts of male voluntarism was the establishment of local branches of major patriotic funds,¹ as well as organising public farewells to departing troops.² The public activities were reported in detail in the *Camden News*.

In 1939 Camden's male elite had an initial burst of enthusiasm organising wardens, and other personnel, for Camden's civil defence through the National Emergency Services.³ After a lull, this activity was re-invigorated by the defeat of the British at

¹ For instance, during the Boer War Camden's male elite established the Camden branch of the New South Wales Patriotic Fund. *Camden News*, 18 January 1900. In the First World War they established the Camden branch of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund. *Camden News*, 27 August 1914.

² One such event, Camden's Gala Day Sports Carnival, was held on 26 January 1915 to support the Lord Mayor's Patriotic Fund. It was organised by the Camden Cycling Club. *Camden News*, 17 December 1914. Public farewell to Lieutenant Colonel A. Onslow Thompson of *Camden Park*. *Camden News*, 10 September 1914.

³ For wardens and duties: *Camden Advertiser*, 24 August 1939; *Camden News*, 28 September 1939. Appointment of Chief Warden by Camden Municipal Council: CMC, Minutes, 11 September 1939. Personnel guarding bridges and water courses in Camden area: *Camden Advertiser*, 31 August

Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the beginning of the Blitz.. These events were seen in Camden as a threat to Australian-British nationalism and an appropriate patriotic response was required by Camden's male elite, a reaction not unique to Camden⁴ (see Chapter Two). In the months following the defeat, Camden's male elite decided to establish the Soldiers' Recreation Room, farewell Camden servicemen, initiate the *Camden Advertiser* War-Time Plan, establish the RAAF comforts fund committee, re-establish the Camden branch of the RSSAILA (July 1940), commence collecting salvage, and have an appeal for the Great Britain War Victim's Relief Fund (see Chapter Five). The Soldiers' Recreation Room, the soldiers' farewells and Arthur Gibson's support for the WVS through the *Camden Advertiser* and the War-Time Plan are the focus for this chapter. The RAAF comforts fund committee was examined in Chapter Six and salvage collection is examined in Chapter Ten.

The Soldiers' Recreation Room.

The defeat at Dunkirk and the perilous situation in Great Britain, the presence of the military personnel at the Eastern Command Training School at *Studley Park*, Narellan and the RAAF Central Flying School at Camden aerodrome,⁵ as well as the example of the canteens conducted by the British WVS and other organisations, lay behind the decision by Camden's male elite to establish the Soldiers' Recreation Room. The Room was initiated in June 1940 by Robert Crookston (a local doctor and husband of Zoe Crookston, president of the Camden WVS). The initiative went by various names including the Soldiers' Room, Soldiers' and Airmens' Club Room, Soldiers' Recreation Room and the Soldiers' Rest Room. It will be referred to here for consistency as the Soldiers' Recreation Room. The idea for the Room was not

1939.

⁴ For instance, Mildura formed a patriotic committee with the shire clerk would taking a central role. McIntyre and McIntyre, *Country Towns of Victoria*, pp. 278-9. Milton-Ulladulla established a district patriotic committee in November, 1940. McAndrew, *Milton Ulladulla in the Wars*, p. 173. Cohuna, Victoria, established a patriotic fund in August, 1940. Sheridan, *Cohuna District*, p. 12. Eden had a patriotic committee. Baker, Barty, Gow, Norris & Sutherland, *Eden and the Second World War*, p. 10. Colac set up a patriotic committee in January, 1940. Peel, *Voluntary War Effort*. Whyalla set up a patriotic committee in January 1941. Stanley, 'Don't let Whyalla Down', p. 25;

⁵ The Army had purchased *Studley Park* at Narellan, in April, 1940 for infantry training courses, but exercises had been conducted there from late 1939. AA: SP857, PC681/586, Department of Interior Correspondence Files [DoICF], *Studley Park*, 16 January 1940 to 7 June 1940; Letter, R.C. to I.C.W., 21 August 1987. The Air Board took control of the airfield in April 1940. *Camden News*, 4 April 1940. The RAAF established the Central Flying School at Camden Aerodrome in May 1940, with a compliment of around 300 men. RAAF Central Flying School, Movement Order No 2, Point Cook to Camden, 14 May 1940; Interview, C.W., Camden, 3 January 1988; Letter, L.V.G. to I.C.W., 9 August 1987.

unique to Camden, and similar services were provided in other country towns such as Nowra and Bowral.⁶

Robert Crookston raised the idea of the Room at the June meeting of the Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society, when he spoke

of the great need in Camden of a place where members of the AIF and RAAF could read and write, and stated that if the Supper Room of the Agricultural Hall could be made available that it would be suitably furnished for the purpose at no cost to the Society and kept clean and in order.⁷

The Room would be 'at no cost' to the Society because Crookston already had a source for funding for it. As the *Camden News* reported, 'a local lady', namely Francis Faithfull Anderson

whose aid and interest is always forthcoming where the comfort of others is concerned has offered material help in making these quarters more comfortable and congenial for visitors. Her proposal is to supply a carpet for the floor, easy chairs, install a gas fire, and provide a wireless set.⁸

The original idea probably came from Francis Faithfull Anderson,⁹ an elderly female member of the Camden gentry. Francis Faithfull Anderson was a strong supporter of Camden's wartime activities, and her daughter, Clarice was patron of the WVS. It is likely that Francis Faithfull Anderson, Robert Crookston, Zoe Crookston (Robert's wife and WVS president), Clarice Faithfull Anderson and George Sidman, the owner of the *Camden News* discussed the matter before Crookston raised it with the Society. All were members of Camden's elite. Despite Francis Faithfull Anderson's social authority and economic wealth, she still needed a male member of the Camden elite to put her proposition forward, especially to the all male committee of

^{6.} For instance, the Nowra ACF Comfort's Room was a similar facility. It was located in an empty shop near the Post Office and from reports was well patronised by servicemen stationed in the area. The women on duty sold cups of tea and coffee and it had small dormitory upstairs. It was staffed every day by women from the local CWA, Red Cross and RSSAILA Auxiliary until 11:00pm, who thought that it was 'their patriotic duty'. Interview, K.H., Nowra, 12 April 1998. A recreation room for men from a local Army camp was established in Bowral at the Parish Hall, and was staffed by women from local voluntary organisations, including the Red Cross. Willard, *History of Red Cross in Bowral*, p. 15.

^{7.} CHS, Camden AH&I Society, Committee Meeting, Minutes, 17 June 1940.

^{8.} *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

^{9.} She died in 1948.

the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society.¹⁰ And the leadership of the WVS supported the proposal from the outset. It was therefore not surprising when the Camden WVS later took over management of the Room.

A motion supporting the proposal for the Room was duly moved at the Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society meeting by George Sidman, and passed by the committee. The Recreation Room was to occupy both the supper room and the meeting room in the rear of the agricultural hall.¹¹ These rooms were at the rear of the stage in the hall, and had timber floors, a plain interior and no furniture or heating. The rooms were out of the way, despite the agricultural hall fronting Camden's main street, the Hume Highway. On June evenings, the unheated rooms would have been quite uncomfortable and not as attractive to servicemen as Camden's hotels with their log fires and convivial atmosphere.

The Society then appointed Robert Crookston

to represent the Society in connection with arrangements to be made with those who were to be responsible for providing and maintaining this service at the Supper Room for the benefit of the RAAF and AIF.¹²

Sidman maintained in the *Camden News*:

The proposal is a worthy one, and should prove of great value to all airmen and soldiers stationed in the vicinity of Camden.¹³

He felt that this was 'a very patriotic move' by the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society 'providing comfortable quarters' for 'a Soldier's [sic] Club Room'. He stated that the Society's aim was to have the Room 'equipped with furniture', to allow 'any soldier to use [it] for writing letters, social intercourse [and] games'. Sidman stated further that the Room was to 'be open at all times including well into the night'.¹⁴

10. Even in 2002 the Camden Show Committee was still all male.

11. CHS, Camden AH&I Society, 1942 Annual Report, 21 December 1942. .

12. CHS, Camden AH&I Society, Committee Meeting, Minutes, 17 June 1940.

13. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

14. *ibid.*

Crookston gave no indication at the Society meeting who was going to staff or maintain the Room. The *Camden News* reported that either the WVS, Red Cross or the CWA would 'give their services' to organise and clean the room, provide reading material and volunteers to staff the room and generally 'ensure [that] the Club Room... [was]... a home away from home' for the men.¹⁵ Yet, as already noted, the proposal had the support of the WVS leadership and Zoe Crookston would ensure that the WVS would fill the gap. In July, the WVS took responsibility for the 'provisioning, care and maintenance' of the Room (although the leadership would never take part in the mundane day-to-day running of the Room; as with the other WVS activities discussed in the thesis that would be generally left to WVS members from Camden's lower classes).¹⁶

The women of the WVS provided a 'pleasant function' at the official opening of the Room in mid-July 1940 by Robert Crookston. Crookston, representing the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society, re-iterated that the Society had provided 'the room free of charge', and that it would be 'open at all times for the use of soldiers and airmen who may at any time be in Camden'. Captain Costello from Eastern Command Training School at *Studley Park*, Narellan, and Flight Leader Bate of the RAAF Central Flying School, stated that 'the conveniences offered would be greatly appreciated by the members of the Commonwealth Forces'.¹⁷

The WVS supplied provisions and voluntary staff for the Room, while the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society met the costs associated with electricity and gas. The gas heater was donated by Francis Faithfull Anderson of *Camelot*, who also provided books and magazines along with Emily Barker of *Maryland*, Bringelly, Eleanor Macdonald of *Kelvin*, Leah McLeod and Annie Dickenson. Sarah Scholes donated a small table and George Sidman and Arthur Gibson copies of the *Camden News* and *Camden Advertiser*.¹⁸ Despite these donations, the WVS still had to appeal to the Camden community for more reading material, chairs, ashtrays and games.¹⁹

15. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

16. *Camden News*, 18 July 1940.

17. *ibid.*

18. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940, 19 June 1941.

19. *Camden News*, 4 July 1940, 11 July 1940.

In July 1940 the Room was used by a unit of 2/AIF Engineers who stayed overnight and were reportedly pleased with the facilities.²⁰ As well, 150 soldiers of C Coy 2/17 Battalion under Captain Magmo camped in the agricultural hall, and used the Room, after marching from Ingleburn to Camden on manoeuvres.²¹

The Room, however, was not used extensively by the servicemen stationed in the district. In January 1941 the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society wrote to the RAAF Central Flying School asking if the Room 'was being used by members of the RAAF'.²² The commanding officer of the Flying School replied, that he felt there was 'no real necessity' for the Room,²³ as there was a parallel facility at the RAAF Base.²⁴ It was only the intervention of the WVS²⁵ that kept the Room open. Zoe Crookston maintained that 'the room was most useful and being used more than ever, mainly on account of the establishment of the military camp at Narellan' on the northern side of the town.²⁶

The WVS attempted to lift the Room's patronage by improving the provision of amenities. In early March 1941 the WVS appealed for a wireless set,²⁷ but a special WVS sub-committee meeting decided to purchase one instead, and requested the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society to install a power point. The wireless set was eventually installed with a power point and brackets²⁸ at a total cost to the WVS of £20/2/-.²⁹ The WVS also decided to purchase a bookcase and subsequently received further donations of books.³⁰ As well, the WVS asked Phillip Fox, the proprietor of the Paramount Theatre, to run a screen advertisement about the

^{20.} *Camden News*, 18 July 1940.

^{21.} *Camden News*, 25 July 1940.

^{22.} CHS, Camden AH&I Society, Committee Meeting, Minutes, 20 January 1941.

^{23.} CHS, Camden AH&I Society, Committee Meeting, Minutes, 17 February 1941.

^{24.} *Camden News*, 20 February 1941.

^{25.} *ibid.*

^{26.} *Camden News*, 27 February 1941. The Commonwealth Government acquired the lease to Narellan Military Camp in November 1940. AA:SP857/53 B534, Department of the Army, Correspondence from Major Martin, AMF to the Secretary, Land Valuation Committee, Sydney, 7 May 1941. The camp was first occupied in February 1941 by the 1st Light Horse (Machine Gun) Regiment. Letter, N.B. to I.C.W., 4 January 1988; Letter, F.C. to I.C.W., 8 February 1987.

^{27.} *Camden News*, 6 March 1941.

^{28.} CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 10 April 1941.

^{29.} CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 8 May 1941.

^{30.} CHS, Camden WVS Sub-Committee, Minutes, 20 March 1941.

Room,³¹ in the hope that it might attract the soldiers who came into town and went to the movies.

Two WVS volunteers, Elsie Mason and Kathleen Dunk, staffed the Room, while the WVS paid Mary Tomlinson and her daughter to do the cleaning. Mary Tomlinson and her daughter were from a miner's family, members of Camden's working class and were not members of the Camden WVS.³² By November 1941, the WVS was pressing the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society for a subsidy from other hall hirers, as the WVS considered that their cleaner was undertaking unnecessary extra work because of Society activities, all without success.³³

Low attendances at the Room persisted and continued to be a problem for the WVS. In November 1941 the women wrote to the adjutants at the RAAF Central Flying School, Narellan Military Camp and Eastern Command Training School at *Studley Park*.³⁴ The WVS wanted additional publicity for the Room and comments on the desirability of maintaining the Room.³⁵ In response, the padre from the RAAF Central Flying School felt that the Room should stay open,³⁶ and the WVS subsequently provided the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Bulletin*.³⁷

Despite the best intentions of the WVS, when servicemen at the local military establishments took leave, they usually went to Sydney rather than come into Camden. When they did come into Camden, more often than not, they visited one of the town's four hotels. In one way the Room reflected some of Camden's sense of conservatism and a desire by Camden's Protestant elite, represented by the Crookstons and the Sidmans, to protect the morals of visiting soldiers and airmen by providing a facility free of alcohol. George Sidman was 'a devoted layman of the Methodist Church',³⁸ and Methodism and temperance had been part of Camden's social culture from the nineteenth century. They would feel vindicated later in the

³¹ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 27 March 1941.

³² *Camden News*, 19 June 1941; CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 November 1940;

³³ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 13 November 1941, 4 December 1941.

³⁴ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 13 November 1941.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 4 December 1941.

³⁷ CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 14 November 1940; *Camden News*, 16 July 1942.

³⁸ Sommerlad, *Serving the Country Press*, p. 220.

war, by rowdy scenes at local hotels, the arrest of a number of servicemen and the subsequent establishment of a 'dry canteen'.

The Room was closed in March 1942 not by the WVS but by the requisitioning of Camden Showground and all its buildings by the military authorities. The hall was taken over by the 11th Casualty Clearing Station, as a mobile hospital unit. The WVS women left in the Room a wireless set, ping-pong table and bookcase, and donated £5 towards comforts for the nursing sisters and £10/7/0 for the men³⁹ (A similar facility would be re-established in 1944 and this is discussed in Chapter Nine).

The Recreation Room became part of the generalised comforts program of the WVS within its service commitment. The Room was one practical example of the WVS voluntary service ethos in action, particularly on the part of the two WVS volunteers who staffed it. From January 1941 the Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society had no real interest in the Recreation Room, and represents one of the wartime activities that were abandoned by Camden's elite male population but maintained by the WVS.

The loss of interest by the male elite in the Recreation Room illustrated the differing gender expectations in Camden. On the one hand, Camden's elite male population only wanted to be connected with high profile public events from which they could gain kudos. On the other hand, the self-sacrifice of the WVS volunteers who did not seek public acclamation for the efforts, and in the end received little acknowledgment was typical of differing gender expectations. But it also reflected the role of class. As discussed earlier in the thesis publicity for wartime activities in Camden was usually only associated with the voluntary effort of the Camden elite. As Mason and Dunk were not members of the elite, they received little publicity for their voluntary service. Class in Camden gave the WVS voluntary service ethos a multi-dimensional nature and each class responded differently to it.

39.

Nixon, *Camden Show Society Centenary*, p. 34; CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 12 March 1942; *Camden News*, 16 July 1942.

The role of Robert Crookston, and his wife Zoe, also illustrated the gender divisions in Camden voluntarism. Robert Crookston was a member of the male elite and he represented Camden's patriarchal public sphere where men acted in the public arena, often through the pages of the local press. Zoe Crookston's 'agency' represented the supportive role of women in the private sphere, by 'providing an environment in which *men* could live and work [sic]',⁴⁰ just as Reading had done with her husband. Crookston practised the service and self-sacrifice she had been schooled in, so that her husband could take a high profile public role befitting his social status in the town. Zoe Crookston represented Victorian values in Camden, which were typical of the service culture of the WVS, and which could be found in Camden's rural ideology.

The Soldier's Farewells

Soldier's farewells were yet another example of the response by Camden's male elite to the defeat at Dunkirk, the gender expectations within Camden's voluntarism, declining interest on the part of Camden's male elite and the way the ideology of service was used to support actions taken by Camden's male elite.

On 6 June 1940, George Sidman, moved by Churchill's famous 'We shall fight on the beaches... We shall never surrender' speech in Britain on 4 June⁴¹ angrily demanded:

... could not Camden do something more than is being done?... Citizens of Camden are anxious to be of service, if a leader can be found there may be an effort to at least bid farewell to the honoured young men who are leaving our shores to defend our country and our homes.⁴²

Sidman's statement prompted the Camden Returned Soldiers' Fraternity to request the mayor, Stan Kelloway, to call a public meeting.⁴³ The meeting first passed a

⁴⁰ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, p. 26.

⁴¹ On the front page of the *Camden News* George Sidman reported on British Emergency Powers Act, Churchill's speech & war cabinet and reports in the London press, combined with an editorial - 'Allies Time of Trial'. *Camden News*, 6 June 1940.

⁴² Camden Council had decided against calling public meetings for recruiting purposes, or assisting the RAAF to obtain sporting equipment. *Camden News*, 6 June 1940.

⁴³ The Fraternity was to become the RSSAILA on 11 July 1940. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940. At the

patriotic resolution 'to secure a successful termination of the crisis facing the Empire' by forming a national all party government, like Great Britain's. It was then unanimously decided by all those present at the meeting to form an organisation to be known as the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association.⁴⁴ The aims of the Association were to compile lists of names of Camden men on active service, to organise 'public farewell socials' for the men, 'to give the utmost assistance wherever necessary to the dependents of these men while they are abroad', and to welcome them home.⁴⁵ The patrons of the Association were James Macarthur Onslow, (major-general, retired) and the mayor. Its officers were William Cruikshank, president, Robert Crookston and George Eldrid, vice-presidents, Albert Putland, secretary, the Methodist minister, Harold Coleman, assistant secretary, Jack Stibbard, treasurer and a general committee of six men.⁴⁶ The Protestant elite dominated the executive, while the remainder of the committee were members of the lower-middle and working class.

After the formation of the Association, the only other matter discussed at the meeting was a decision to hold the town's first soldier's farewell of the war. It was decided to make 'presentations' of comforts 'to all those who have enlisted for Active Service from this district' with the 7th Division of the Second AIF.⁴⁷ At a committee meeting the following week the WVS, Red Cross and CWA offered 'to undertake the whole of the responsibility of supper arrangements'.⁴⁸ No mention was made for

meeting the following motion was put up for discussion: 'That this Public Meeting of the Citizens of Camden pledges itself to assist the Government of our Country in every effort to secure a successful termination of the crisis facing the Empire, and unanimously and urgently requests that immediate steps be taken to form a National Government, including all parties, with no other object in view furthering this end.' The motion was carried unanimously. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

44

Camden News, 20 June 1940.

45

The Association was registered under the *Charitable Collection Act* with the Chief Secretary's Department and not under the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. *Camden News*, 5 December 1940

46.

The members of the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association committee were James Macarthur Onslow, (major-general retired), Stan Kelloway (mayor, storekeeper, Methodist), William Cruikshank (farmer, Methodist), Robert Crookston (doctor, Presbyterian), George Eldred (motor mechanic), Albert Putland (Methodist minister), Jack Stibbard (manager Bank of New South Wales), Walter Holdsworth (garage proprietor), Harold Taplin (labourer), Bert Price (blacksmith), Wesley Clifton (grocer, Methodist), Herbert Ryder (labourer, Methodist) and George Sidman (newspaper publisher, Methodist). *Camden Advertiser*, 20 March 1941.

47.

This type of activity was not unique to Camden. Providing comforts to each man on embarkation was a practice adopted by the Australian Comforts Fund in 1940. The first special issues from the ACF occurred in 1940 when each man on embarkation going to Middle East received an Embarkation Kit including canvas tropical hat, sand-shoes, and other comforts. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 27. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940.

48.

Camden News, 20 June 1940.

any plans to farewell the fifty-seven local men who had already volunteered from the Camden area.⁴⁹

The first farewell was held in June 1940. There was standing room only when around 800 people, about one-third of the local population, crammed into the agricultural hall⁵⁰ to farewell twenty local men. The evening opened with the national anthem, then community singing accompanied by Minnie Kelloway's orchestra. This was followed by musical items by local children, a recitation and tap dancing, all of which filled the first hour of the evening. There were speeches by local dignitaries, presentations and finally the hall was cleared for dancing.

The speeches at the farewell overflowed with patriotic rhetoric and imperial symbolism. William Cruikshank, the president of the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association, farmer and Methodist lay preacher⁵¹, maintained the aim of the Association was to farewell 'all men from Camden' and,

We will welcome them [back], not only as soldiers, but as liberators, liberators from the scourge of Nazism which had overtaken the world. It was not only a sense of loyalty which had prompted these men to offer themselves, but barbarism [sic] of Hitler and his hordes... These men are going to fight for freedom, that freedom which we citizens of the British Empire have enjoyed for so long...⁵²

The mayor, Stan Kelloway, also a Methodist, assured the volunteers

of the unstinting support of the people of the district whilst they were away... they would do well, as inspired by the traditions of the First AIF reinforced by the knowledge that the people of the Empire... spoke with one voice and through one mouthpiece, that of Mr Winston Churchill, in whom we here have the greatest confidence. The Mayor pledged the people of the Camden

⁴⁹. List of 77 names of men who had volunteered from the Camden area appeared in the *Camden News*. *Camden News*, 4 July 1940.

⁵⁰. The Agricultural Hall is still standing in the Camden Showground unaltered from 1940 and is currently licensed to seat only 650 people under New South Wales Fire Regulations. Interview, Mr Duncan, Health & Building Section, Camden Municipal Council, 9 August 1993.

⁵¹. William Spurgeon Cruikshank was to become Mayor of Camden from 1953 to 1960. Wrigley, *Camden Characters*, p. 10.

⁵². *Camden News*, 27 June 1940.

district to do all in their power to prove worthy of the sacrifice the volunteers were making, and as a pledge of their fidelity, asked the soldiers to accept, through him, the right hand of every man, women and child of this community.⁵³

Robert Crookston stated that:

These men have offered their lives in the service of their country, and of humanity in a fight for the preservation of all that is worth while [sic] in life - for freedom, for the simple rights of men and women; and for everything that means decency and honour among men. This is not only the greatest, but the justest war in all history. It is more than a war. It is a crusade.⁵⁴

James Macarthur Onslow, a First World War veteran, made the presentations of gifts, which were an inscribed wallet with a bullet proof mirror and a 10/- banknote. The men also received a 'special bag of comforts' from the WVS, which were marked with the volunteer's name, and contained 'useful articles together with two pairs of hand knitted socks'. The women of the WVS were the sole providers of the supper at the farewell.⁵⁵

The second farewell in July attracted an even larger crowd of 900 people to the agricultural hall. The Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association had originally hoped to send off forty men, but seemed satisfied with the twenty-nine who appeared at the farewell.⁵⁶ The evening was again chaired by William Cruikshank and Stan Kelloway and began with community singing under the baton of Henry Haylock with Minnie Kelloway on piano. The enthusiastic jingoism of the speakers at the first farewell had subsided, and Kelloway

congratulated the volunteers on behalf of the residents of the municipality, remarking that the wonderful gathering present that evening was evidence of the people's recognition of the loyal services their guests were offering to their country.⁵⁷

⁵³

ibid.

⁵⁴

ibid.

⁵⁵

Camden News, 27 June 1940. The report of the banknote denomination did not appear in the *Camden News* but the *Camden Advertiser* of 9 January 1941, and handy bag and supper details in the *Camden News*, 19 June 1941.

⁵⁶

Camden News, 11 July 1940.

⁵⁷

Camden News, 1 August 1940.

Wing Commander Bates, the officer in charge at the RAAF Central Flying School

welcomed... [the volunteers]... into the Empire's service. He knew the men had a big job in front of them, but they would have the comfort of knowing that all their hard work would be for the betterment of their country and Empire.⁵⁸

Each volunteer was given an inscribed 'pocket wallet', and a bag of 'useful articles' on behalf of the WVS, and 'prior to their departure from the stage, the audience rose and sang, "For They are Jolly Good Fellows." At the end of the evening supper was provided by the women of the WVS and the hall was cleared for dancing.⁵⁹

Two more farewells were held in 1940. At the third farewell in October, 600 people farewelled fourteen volunteers with nineteen unable to attend. The fourth and last farewell was held in December. Twenty-four invitations were sent out but only eight men were able to attend. Sidman did not report the size of the crowd at the fourth farewell in the *Camden News*, probably because of its small size.⁶⁰

The farewells offer an interesting insight into the dynamics of the town's war effort. Each farewell was chaired by William Cruikshank and followed the same pattern as the first, with musical items, speeches and dancing. They could be likened to religious revival meetings with their own preachers, their use of imagery and rhetoric and the outpouring of emotions by the participants, a situation with which Camden's Methodists would have been quite familiar. The speeches at the first soldier farewells reflected the dominant position of British imperial interests within the value system of the local population. The Camden elite gave the local volunteers a heroes send off, which incorporated Hobson's view of imperialism with its 'moral grandeur', 'hero-worship', 'sensational glory' and 'adventure'.⁶¹ The volunteers were going off to protect the nationalistic interests of Camden's British population. All of which Sidman reflected in his editorialisation of the war and the Nazi threat. These events were part of Camden's Protestantism, and were supported by the district's British nationalism. The participants at the farewells were quite sure of their

⁵⁸,
⁵⁹,
⁶⁰,
⁶¹,
ibid.

ibid.

Camden News, 24 October 1940, 2 January 1941.

Hobson, *Imperialism, A Study*, p. 222.

righteousness and virtue, which was directly associated with the supremacy of the British race. They were prestigious events. They were also male affairs where the women, represented by the WVS, took a secondary supportive role.

Yet, those delivering the speeches changed and were drawn from progressively lower down the social status hierarchy. At the first farewell, the speeches were made by the president of the Association, the mayor and Crookston and the presentations were made by a Macarthur Onslow. At the second, the mayor spoke but so, too, did an 'outsider' although he was a wing commander. At the third farewell the dignitaries were the deputy mayor, William Larnach, Major Costello of the Eastern Command Training School, *Studley Park* and Albert Putland, the Methodist minister. At the last farewell the only dignitary was Herbert Whitford, a council alderman and local storekeeper.⁶² Whitford, who represented the mayor who was unable to attend, spoke

of the great interest and personal pride the Mayor has in the men of our district who are prepared to make so great a sacrifice... in their service for the Empire... whether on the sand-swept wastes of Egypt of the Middle East or on the green hills of the Homeland...⁶³

Despite Whitford's lower social ranking his sentiments were similar to those expressed by Camden's male elite at the earlier farewells. This would be Camden's last farewell for its soldiers organised by the Association.

At both the first and second farewells the WVS provided a public supper to everyone who attended and in the process became completely overwhelmed by the physical effort involved in providing refreshments. By the third farewell the WVS had decided to restrict the supper to official guests, their wives, the 'soldiers and three relatives'⁶⁴ due to the 'almost impossible task of serving everyone in the hall'.⁶⁵ Even the service commitment of the women of the WVS had its limits.

^{62.} The second Farewell was held on 26 July 1940. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940, 18 July 1940, 1 August 1940. The third farewell on 25 October 1940. *Camden News*, 17 October 1940, 31 October 1940. The fourth farewell on 27 December 1940. *Camden News*, 5 December 1940, 19 December 1940, 2 January 1941.

^{63.} *Camden News*, 2 January 1941

^{64.} *Camden News*, 17 October 1940.

^{65.} *Camden News*, 24 October 1940.

Why had Camden's farewells ceased? One contributing factor was the inability of many of the soldiers to attend the farewells, despite extending the criteria governing invitations. For the first and second farewells the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association sent invitations to

all men who were residents of this district at the time of enlistment, together with non-residents who enlisted at the Camden Recruiting Depot.⁶⁶

After the second farewell, the criteria were extended to include any soldier 'whose parents were local people' and 'men who reside[d] in other local district centres where no public farewell social had been arranged'. Even though the criteria had been widened, it still restricted the farewells to men to with a 'local' connection,⁶⁷ a typically parochial decision, and one that was similar to other parochial decisions that affected Camden's wartime voluntarism discussed elsewhere in the thesis (for example, Chapter Five).

As the farewells progressed and their novelty wore off so the crowds declined. And, as the list of those speaking at the farewells demonstrates, the members of the Camden's male elite gradually lost interest. The absence of James Macarthur Onslow and Robert Crookston from the second and later farewells, despite their position in the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association, was a general indicator of how they viewed the farewells. Their absence also equates with the lower level of publicity the second farewell received in the *Camden News*. For example, the first farewell took up ninety-four column inches in the *Camden News* while the second, third and fourth received fifty-two, forty-two and fifty column inches respectively (although a sharp rise in the price of newsprint could also have contributed to this situation).⁶⁸ This was similar to other wartime activities in Camden, which received less press coverage in the absence of the Camden elite. By the fourth farewell even Stan Kelloway, the mayor, gave his excuses and let one of the aldermen represent him.

⁶⁶. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940

⁶⁷. *Camden News*, 25 July 1940

⁶⁸. *Camden News*, 20 June 1940, 27 June 1940, 11 July 1940, 25 July 1940, 1 August 1940, 17 October 1940, 24 October 1940, 31 October 1940, 5 December 1940, 12 December 1940, 2 January 1941. The effect of a rise in the price of newsprint in 1940 on the *Camden Advertiser* is referred to in Chapter Eight.

Combined with these factors was the extension of the registration of men for universal training for home defence in January, 1941.⁶⁹ These conscripts removed the gloss from the big public farewells in Camden, which had only farewelled volunteers. This attitude was probably best summed up by Herbert Whitford who stated at the fourth farewell that:

On every occasion Camden has heard the call to duty, and its sons have sprung to arms, eager to bear the banner in this which we hope and trust is the final fight for freedom, and we are as sure as men can be... they will bear themselves with courage, dignity, and self-sacrifice, and add imperishable lustre to the glorious heritage established by their fathers on the slopes of Gallipoli, and the fields of Flanders.⁷⁰

These sentiments were similar to those expressed by Stan Kelloway at the first farewell, which were mentioned earlier. The military tradition and the ANZAC heritage that Whitford and Kelloway refer was set by Camden volunteers. From the time of the Boer War all those who had been honoured for their military service in Camden had been volunteers. There were no servicewomen on any of the farewell lists, and from a search of the available records it appears that no Camden women had volunteered for military service at this stage of the war.

Smaller, less elaborate farewells also took place in the villages surrounding Camden, but unlike Camden, they continued on into 1941. The ceremonial proceedings followed a similar pattern to the Camden farewells, with patriotic speeches and gifts for local volunteers, followed by supper and dancing.⁷¹ These smaller affairs were more intimate and personal than the larger Camden farewells, and in their own way, were the essence of localism. For example, in January 1941 the Orangeville-Werombi Farewell Committee organised a farewell social at the Werombi hall 'in honour of the men who had enlisted' from those areas. Around ninety people attended and farewelled two volunteers, who were presented with 'Parker pens and hand-knitted socks' by two veterans from the First World War. This was followed by

⁶⁹ Enrolment for military training was extended to 10 miles around towns with a population of 500 or more and included Camden, Campbelltown, Cobbitty, Douglas Park, Menangle, Narellan, The Oaks, Picton and Bargo. *Camden News*, 23 January 1941.

⁷⁰ *Camden News*, 2 January 1941

⁷¹ Two employees of Cliftons were farewelled in Camden in March, 1941. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 March 1941. Ninety people attended a farewell for two men at Werombi, while at Menangle two men were farewelled. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 January 1941. Ten employees were farewelled at Camden Park Estate. *Camden Advertiser*, 19 September 1940. Two men were farewelled at Narellan. *Camden Advertiser*, 13 February 1941.

'a nice supper... prepared by the ladies'.⁷² A similar farewell was held at Menangle, where gifts of comforts were made to two local men by James Macarthur Onslow, the local patriarch. The official ceremony was followed by 'a much enjoyed dance programme... [and]... a splendid supper supplied by the ladies'.⁷³ Considering the small size of these communities, the soldier farewells were well attended and illustrated the direct link between patriotism and localism.

Local businesses in Camden also farewelled their employees. For example Clifton Bros Pty Ltd, a general store, farewelled two of its employees⁷⁴ and *Camden Park* farewelled ten employees.⁷⁵ Men took the dominant public role at all these presentations, while the women assumed secondary positions.

Farewells in the Camden area were not unique and were a typical part of the wartime scene in most country towns. For instance, Shirley Birrell recalls that in Quipolly, a small community in northern New South Wales, that farewells were organised whenever a local serviceman came home on final leave. They were organised by a local committee, held in the local hall and the MC was the local school teacher (as he was more accomplished at speech making). There were the usual speeches, followed by supper and a dance. At supper time the guest of honour and his family were seated on stage with the 'official' guests. Each serviceman was presented with a parcel of items 'to aid his comfort while overseas and to remind him of his home community'. They consisted of a razor, a comb, an 'unbreakable' mirror (made of polished steel), a notepad, a 'housewife' ('a small folder of needles and threads, buttons and safety pins') and 'a wallet of notes'.⁷⁶

By late 1941 the military authorities were warning local communities against holding farewells for men from their districts. They stated:

These farewell parties are a source of great potential danger to Australian troops who are about to embark... Not only are announcements that a soldier is on final leave serious leakages of information, but they lay the soldier

⁷² *Camden Advertiser*, 9 January 1941.

⁷³ *ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 6 March 1941.

⁷⁵ *Camden Advertiser*, 19 September 1940.

⁷⁶ Letter from Shirley Birrell, quoted in Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 17.

concerned open to a charge of imparting information... There are mixed audiences on such occasions, and potential enemy agents would find them a rich field for their operations... It has now reached a degree that will compel military authorities to give attention to it, unless action is taken by the proprietors and parties concerned to see that the practice ceases.⁷⁷

Under such proclamations the practice ceased in the Camden area. This was probably a relief for the male organisers of the farewells connected with the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association, but in the smaller communities there would have been disappointment.

In Camden itself, the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association continued to meet but it had no real purpose after December 1940. At a poorly attended annual general meeting in July 1941, it was proposed to disband the Association and give the balance of the funds (£45) to the WVS.⁷⁸ A deputation from the Association met with the WVS and after discussions formed a Men's Auxiliary of the Camden WVS in August 1941.⁷⁹ The aim of the Auxiliary was to 'assist in the work of providing for the local district boys on active service', which in practice simply meant assisting with patriotic fundraising for the WVS. The Auxiliary president was William Cruikshank, who had previously been the president of the Association, the secretary/treasurer was Arthur Gibson and the social secretary, Bert Price.⁸⁰ Notable by their absence and lack of support were James Macarthur Onslow, Stan Kelloway and Robert Crookston. All had been original members of the Association and were members of Camden's male elite.

Although the new Auxiliary had a projected membership of twenty-five 'enthusiastic workers', attendance at the first meeting was 'disappointing'.⁸¹ The Auxiliary, however, persevered and raised over £142 for the WVS,⁸² through dances and a carnival.⁸³ By July 1942 the Auxiliary had presented twenty-four men with wallets, 10/- banknotes and special bags of comforts.

⁷⁷ *Camden News*, 11 December 1941.

⁷⁸ *Camden News*, 3 July 1941.

⁷⁹ Deputation. *Camden News*, 3 July 1943. Formation of Auxiliary. *Camden News*, 28 August 1941, 16 July 1942.

⁸⁰ *Camden News*, 28 August 1941.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *Camden News*, 16 July 1942.

⁸³ *ibid.*

Yet, the Auxiliary occupied an uncomfortable position in Camden's war effort. It was a secondary body within the WVS. Although women's associations may have commanded a greater social authority in Camden, the men's associations commanded a higher public profile. Men in Camden played out their roles in the public arena as was the case with the Camden District Soldier's and Citizen's Association. The Men's Auxiliary was a supporting organisation attached to the WVS; therefore it possessed a lower social status than the WVS itself. When the men founded the Auxiliary they effectively downgraded their own social status, and doomed the Auxiliary to a short life. It was also overtaken by events, especially Japan's entry into the war. In January and February 1942, it had to compete with the civil defence arrangements organised by the Camden National Emergency Services, which had a predominantly male membership, was organised by the male elite, and consequently, had a higher social status. The Auxiliary closed in October 1942. The women of the WVS, however, continued to supply farewell gifts for departing servicemen. They at least had not abandoned what they saw as their service responsibilities.

After the collapse of the Men's Auxiliary, the Camden RSSAILA volunteered to supervise weekly Thursday night dances at the Empire Hall to raise funds for the WVS. This was to be one of their principal contributions to the homefront war effort. The advantage the RSSAILA had over the Auxiliary was its independence and higher social status. This meant that the RSSAILA had greater legitimacy and credibility with Camden's male population than did the Auxiliary.

By May 1943, the Camden RSSAILA, under the direction of its president Edgar Downes (1884-1953), a First World War veteran (captain) and a member of the Camden gentry, had raised £273 for the WVS. This amounted to 32 per cent of all funds raised for the WVS Centre for that year.⁸⁴ During 1944 the Camden RSSAILA raised 16 per cent (£156) of the total funds of the WVS.⁸⁵ This support continued during 1945 when the dances provided 20 per cent (£167) of the WVS's income for the year. The WVS expressed their 'sincere appreciation'⁸⁶ and were

⁸⁴ *Camden News*, 5 August 1943. The RSSAILA was re-formed in July 1940 from the Camden Returned Soldier's Fraternity. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940.

⁸⁵ *Camden News*, 29 July 1943.

⁸⁶ *Camden News*, 9 August 1945

'most grateful' for the help of the '1st AIF'.⁸⁷ The RSSAILA accounted for 22 per cent of all funds raised by the WVS between 1943 and 1945. If the funds raised by the WVS Men's Auxiliary in 1942 are included, the total raised by the men from dances was 21 per cent of all WVS funds raised during the war. This source of funds was second after donations, which accounted for 31 per cent of all funds received during the war.⁸⁸ This illustrated the strong support for the WVS from Camden's male elite, the social authority of the WVS women and was also indicative of the influence of Camden women on matters related to soldier welfare.

Male voluntary organisations in Camden had to seem to be independent of the control of Camden's women's organisations for them to succeed. Male voluntary organisations, like the RSSAILA, could assist the WVS, conduct fundraising for them, assist their activities and publicly praise the women for their patriotism. The failure of the Men's Auxiliary showed the importance of perceptions in Camden, particularly surrounding gender roles and status. Men in Camden could not be seen to take a secondary role to women in Camden's public space.

Despite the agency of Camden women, their 'public persona' and the 'parallel power structures', which they constructed for themselves, they were still limited by public perceptions that were constrained by patriarchy and Camden's social conservatism. Even if the social authority, and thus social power, of Camden's women's organisations, like the WVS and the Red Cross, were greater than men's organisations with respect to wartime activities, this could not be publicly acknowledged. Camden's public space was governed by patriarchy.

In this context, Camden was no different from other rural communities where gender relationships were unequal.⁸⁹ Dempsey is only partly correct when he argues that women were disadvantaged through socialisation, community mores and expectations, by acquiring gender specific identity through the tasks they performed for the males. He maintains that subordinating and excluding women was facilitated by men successfully stereotyping women and their activities as inferior and having this accepted by the community.⁹⁰ This interpretation does not take account of

⁸⁷ *Camden News*, 10 August 1944.

⁸⁸ Camden WVS, Annual Reports, 1942-1945.

⁸⁹ Dempsey, *Smalltown*; Wild, *Bradstow*; Poiner, *The Good Old Rule*.

⁹⁰ Dempsey, *Smalltown*, pp. 287-88.

women's 'agency and entitlement', and the schooling of Camden women in Victorian notions of service and self-sacrifice, where they willingly supported male patriarchy and existing male institutions. Camden women exercised considerable social authority in their own right, guided by Camden's rural ideology, conservatism and patriarchy.

Arthur Gibson and the *Camden Advertiser*.

As already noted, in mid-1940 there was a flurry of activity in Camden from the town's male population in response to the Dunkirk crisis. It created an outpouring of British nationalism that appeared in the pages of Arthur Gibson's *Camden Advertiser*. The response of Camden's male population to the crisis, however, was not uniform, and an examination of Gibson's reaction through the *Camden Advertiser* shows the subtle variations that were created by male voluntarism.

Arthur Gibson was a 'blow in' and initially worked for George Sidman on the *Camden News* as a compositor. In 1935 he established the *Camden Advertiser* as an independent free weekly newspaper. Gibson had stiff competition from Sidman's *Camden News* and always struggled to make a living from the *Advertiser*. Gibson, like Tucker, successfully overcame the natural resistance of Camden's rural ideology to 'blow ins' by championing local causes. He always had the best interests of the community at heart, and under his direction the *Camden Advertiser* was always highly parochial and acted as the ultimate expression of localism. Gibson embraced the region's rural ideology through the pages of his paper.

Gibson was a moderate and a liberal humanitarian in the British Protestant tradition. He was a member of Camden's lower middle-class and never became a member of Camden's ruling elite. He was always seen by the local community as a 'decent sort of fellow'.⁹¹ He saw himself as an active citizen of the British Empire and fostered these ideals through the pages of the *Advertiser*. British citizenship according to Arthur Gibson, George Sidman and others, including TR Bavin, bestowed 'rights and privileges' on individuals in the Empire. Gibson also felt that the collective benefits

⁹¹. Willis, 'Active Citizens and Loyal Patriots', p. 82.

that accrued to the individual from their membership of the British Empire was the acceptance of patriotic 'obligations'. This meant that 'each citizen of the Empire [had] to make a positive contribution to its development'.⁹²

Hence, during the Dunkirk crisis Gibson felt that Camden residents, as British citizens, owed their loyalty to the British people in their hour of need, and were obligated to help. He felt that his paper should be a vehicle to encourage community support for those organisations in the Camden area that fostered the values of British nationalism and imperial patriotism. He therefore publicised the activities of Camden's British based organisations, such as the WVS, and other philanthropic organisations, like the VAD and Red Cross. Gibson recognised that nationalism and patriotism were central to the ideology of service and his embracement of it was quite predictable. He drew a direct link between support for the WVS and support for the British Empire, and offered a 'war-effort discount' on all WVS advertising for 'patriotic functions',⁹³ which mainly related to dances, concerts, sports and fairs.⁹⁴ He felt that

this newspaper, which has fearlessly and unceasingly advocated the adoption of democratic ideals into our daily and public life, must add its weight - however small - to aid the British Empire in its hour of need.⁹⁵

Gibson created a direct link between British nationalism, imperial patriotism, the Dunkirk crisis and the WVS through the pages of the *Camden Advertiser*. This was not an isolated incident and a cursory review of the *Advertiser* shows that Gibson gave coverage to a number of patriotic events during this period including 'The Empire's Call to Prayer', AIF recruiting drives, compiling names of Camden servicemen on active duty for the WVS comforts distribution list and publishing the 'Camden Honor Roll' (as discussed in Chapter Six), and reporting details of the soldier's farewells (as discussed earlier).⁹⁶

⁹² T.R. Bavin, 'Empire Citizenship', *Australian Quarterly*, 1, 3, September 1929, pp. 21-25 in Arnold, Spearitt and Walker, *Out of Empire*, p. 23. Bavin was premier of New South Wales from 1927-1930.

⁹³ He also included the Red Cross Society, the Voluntary Aid Detachment, 'patriotic fund organisers, and Government advertisements relating to the war-effort', for 'patriotic functions'. *Camden Advertiser*, 23 May 1940.

⁹⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 6 June 1940.

⁹⁵ *Camden Advertiser*, 23 May 1940.

⁹⁶ *Camden Advertiser*, 23 May 1940, 30 May 1940, 6 June 1940, 13 June 1940, 20 June 1940, 11 July 1940.

In mid-1940 the *Camden Advertiser* was in serious financial trouble due to a 100 per cent increase in the price of newsprint. Gibson needed an imaginative scheme to save his newspaper. He used British nationalism and support for the WVS as a central part of his strategy. He did not deliberately set to use nationalism in this way. It was just part of his world view which he unconsciously used as part of his editorial policy. He called it the *Camden Advertiser* War-Time Plan. His general aim was to encourage each reader to donate 6d per month to the newspaper, after which he would take out overheads, with the balance of any profits going to the WVS. This was a form of subscription and, according to Gibson, was to assist in 'establishing the economic security of this newspaper for the duration of the war'.⁹⁷ Gibson felt that, apart from the readers assisting the survival of his business, they were helping to save an essential part of the homefront war effort. In his view the paper was a vehicle for the promulgation of support for the Empire and its interests in Camden. According to Gibson the paper did this by publishing patriotic notices and publicising patriotic events of the WVS, and other British interests in Camden. Gibson maintained that he had a solid basis for this belief as his paper already published '95 per cent' of this type of business in Camden.⁹⁸ Therefore, he claimed that a donation towards his War-Time Plan was an act of fiscal patriotism (as discussed in Chapter Five).

Over the next few months Gibson changed the organisational details of the Plan a number of times, and in doing so, created confusion in minds of the *Advertiser's* readers. This contributed to the mixed success of the whole proposal. In August 1940 Gibson maintained that

the entire profits - money in excess of our listed expenses - will be given each quarter to provide comforts and assistance for the local district residents who have enlisted for active service.⁹⁹

This meant supporting the soldier comforts and Christmas parcels that the WVS sent Camden servicemen overseas, the lists for which were kept up to date by Gibson and published in the *Advertiser* as the Camden 'Honor Rolls'. Under this arrangement

^{97.} *Camden Advertiser*, 9 September 1940.

^{98.} *Camden Advertiser*, 23 May 1940.

^{99.} *Camden Advertiser*, 8 August 1940.

Gibson enthusiastically predicted that he could donate £200 per year to the WVS.¹⁰⁰ By September Gibson also wanted to establish a trust fund and

raise a sum of £3000 for distribution to the Camden and District lads of the AIF and Air Force when they return from active service and again seek to enter civilian life.¹⁰¹

Gibson went further and now offered free advertising and printing 'to patriotic citizens or organisations arranging functions for the War-Time Plan'.¹⁰² Later on in September, 'after discussing the matter with several ex-servicemen and with a number of lads who have enlisted', Gibson decided to combine the trust fund with the Plan. The proposal still supported the aims of the WVS, but had shifted from supporting soldier comforts to creating a fund that would be used for the benefit of soldiers on their return at the end of the war.

Gibson garnered support for the combined Plan and trust fund from the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association. William Cruikshank thought that the idea was 'generous beyond words', while Robert Crookston felt that it was 'something that should be remembered for many years to come.' The Association decided to secure support for the Plan from the WVS prior to the third soldier farewell.¹⁰³ Consequently Gibson and Crookston attended the October WVS meeting, where after much discussion, the WVS agreed that the WVS president and secretary would be joint trustees with the president and vice-president of the Association. As a result, the nominated trustees for the trust fund became Zoe Crookston and Grace Moore from the WVS, Robert Crookston and William Cruikshank from the Association, with Robert Hodgson, a Camden accountant, as auditor.¹⁰⁴ All were members of the Camden elite.

Despite Gibson's best effort, the Plan proved less than successful and he had to make further revisions to it in July 1941.¹⁰⁵ Notwithstanding this, he had created enough

^{100.} *Camden Advertiser*, 11 July 1940, 22 August 1940.

^{101.} *Camden Advertiser*, 5 September 1940.

^{102.} *ibid.*

^{103.} *Camden Advertiser*, 3 October 1940.

^{104.} The motion stated that funds would be held 'in trust for soldiers of this district when they return from war'. CHS, Camden WVS, Minutes, 10 October 1940; *Camden Advertiser*, 9 January 1941.

^{105.} The creation of the trust fund had only resulted in 'a small percentage of readers' regularly subscribing to the Plan, and there was little hope of a surplus for the operations of the newspaper for the 1940-41 financial year. Gibson felt that 'the partial failure of the Plan... was disappointing'.

goodwill amongst his readership for a sufficient number of them to support the Plan until the end of the war, and by doing so, save his paper.

A number of observations can be made about the *Camden Advertiser*, the Plan and its position in Camden's wartime volunteering. The Plan and its antecedent, the 'war-effort discount', was yet another male initiated activity in Camden that started after the defeat at Dunkirk, the success of which rested on the support of the elite. Despite Gibson's use of nationalism and patriotism, he still needed the support of Zoe Crookston, Grace Moore and others, to legitimise the activity in the eyes of the remainder of the community. Even though Gibson could generate a considerable amount of publicity through the *Camden Advertiser* this was still not sufficient to ensure the success of the Plan.

The Plan also reflected the Britishness inherent in philanthropy in Camden, as well as the close links that developed between Gibson and the WVS and the sense of reciprocity that he felt was part of his British citizenship. Gibson gave the activities of the WVS extensive publicity in his newspaper and he had personal links with the WVS. As already noted, he was secretary/treasurer of the WVS Men's Auxiliary, he kept the addresses of soldiers updated for the WVS mailing lists, he offered to extend the War-Time Plan when the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund threatened centralisation of fundraising for soldier comforts and his wife, Elsie, was a member of the general committee of the Camden WVS. Gibson's interest in voluntarism was not opportunistic, but based on his evangelical Protestant heritage, with its long tradition of involvement in reform and voluntarism, and its historical links with British imperialism. Gibson also had a genuine concern for the underdog that was expressed through his sincere open-hearted spirit. He had a strong personal following amongst sections of the Camden community and was described by some as 'quite a generous man'. It was not unknown for him to occasionally run free notices in the *Advertiser* for the less well off in Camden, including members of the Catholic community.¹⁰⁶ His views, as they were expressed in the *Advertiser*, did not

but, that in any event he would 'set aside' £10 for the Plan. He was not to be put off, and was determined to 'Carry On!'. He decided that the *Advertiser* should 'stand on its own financial feet - without the assistance of the Plan' and promptly raised advertising rates. This did not result in any perceptible loss of advertisers for the *Advertiser* and some readers continued to regularly contribute to the Plan. Under this arrangement Gibson continued to pay all surplus funds from the newspaper to the trustees, 'less a nominal advertising charge for publicly acknowledging the donations'. *Camden Advertiser*, 3 July 1941. This arrangement lasted until the end of the war with the funds being invested in War Saving Certificates.

¹⁰⁶

Interview, L.E., Camden, 11 August 1999; Interview, B.F., Camden, 20 September 1999.

gain complete support from all of the Camden community, but his aims in supporting British nationalism and imperial patriotism through the Plan tried to balance the needs for the survival of his business with active wartime citizenship.

As noted above, the relationship between Gibson and the WVS, was a two-way affair and there was a degree of reciprocity on both sides. Crookston and Moore supported Gibson, which in turn helped to support his struggling newspaper. Although Gibson's aims were guided by self-interest, they were mutually beneficial for both the WVS and himself. Under the Plan Gibson raised £250 for the WVS by December 1945.¹⁰⁷ This amounted to 20 per cent of all donations to the WVS between 1941 and 1945. The Plan was the largest single source of donations for the WVS and made up 6 per cent of the total income of the WVS for the duration of the war. This was a significant contribution to the total wartime fundraising of the Camden WVS.

The WVS involvement of Zoe Crookston and Grace Moore with the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association created a paradoxical situation for gender expectations in Camden. On the one hand, the women took a secondary role relative to the men at the soldier farewells, which were organised by the Association, by providing supper. Yet on the other, the Association sought the support of the WVS for the Trust Fund, and this resulted in Crookston and Moore assuming public roles of an equal status with two male members of the Camden elite. Crookston and Moore possessed a considerable amount of social authority in their own right, but usually assumed a secondary role to Camden's male elite (as witnessed by the Soldiers' Room and soldier's farewells). Yet on this occasion the women were able to successfully cross over the boundaries between Camden's private and public space, as Reading did in Great Britain. They were courted by Camden's male elite because of the social influence they exercised within the Camden community. The social position of Crookston and Moore as trustees of the Plan illustrated, again, how members of the female elite from the WVS held the high ground on matters related to soldier welfare issues in Camden. It also points to the considerable respect for, and status of the WVS and its service ethos in the community.

¹⁰⁷.

Camden News, 20 December 1945.

The response to Gibson's use of British nationalism reflected the dissemination of the WVS voluntary service ethos, as well as Camden's Britishness and rural ideology. He used a combination of these factors, along with fiscal patriotism and parochialism, to promote both his paper and the War-Time Plan. Yet, an analysis of donations to the Plan reflected not only similarities with, but also subtle variations to, other fundraising ventures that had utilised a similar approach.

Early support for the Plan reflected the role of parochialism in Camden. Gibson had supported a price rise for local milk producers through the pages of the *Camden Advertiser*, and in turn, the local dairy industry gave the Plan strong support. For example, William Wintle, farmer and district coroner for Burragorang, gave a donation and described the Plan as 'a wonderful idea'. John Haddin, the general manager of *Camden Park* donated £1 towards the Plan in early September and congratulated Gibson on his effort. Haddin thanked Gibson for the *Advertiser* 'drawing attention to the desperate plight of dairymen in [the] district'.¹⁰⁸ And 50 per cent of all donations during the Plan's first sixteen months came from outside the Camden township, with a particularly high level of support from dairy farmers at Brownlow Hill, Razorback, Orangeville, Theresa Park, Spring Creek and others.

Predictably, the Methodist community gave strongly to the Plan, as they did with the canteen appeal. The proportion of donations from the Methodist community was 27 per cent, which was substantially above their proportion of the district's population at 14 per cent. In the first sixteen months families such as the Betts made twenty-four separate donations, while families like the Moores (nine donations) and Smarts (fourteen donations), gave to both the Plan and the canteen appeal.

And fiscal patriotism was important in the Plan. Up the end of October 1940 the reporting of donations followed the standard pattern: donor name, amount of the contribution and location. After the end of November 1940 Gibson continued to list donors and their geographic location, but not the amount of their contribution. Gibson continued this practice until July 1941 when the Plan was re-organised. From this point, he reverted to the original way of reporting donations by donor name, location and amount. The reason why Gibson had stopped listing the amounts donated from November 1940 to July 1941 remain unknown, yet it is possible that

¹⁰⁸.

Camden Advertiser, 5 September 1940.

the amounts were re-instated because public acknowledgment of the amount of the donation was important to the donors: they sought public recognition for their financial acts of patriotism.

Many families of servicemen made regular donations. Interestingly, amongst these families there was no positive correlation between class and the amount donated, as appeared in other appeals.¹⁰⁹ The desire of the Camden community to support the troops broke down the class barriers in Camden, as the analysis of the comfort parcels lists for servicemen showed in Chapter Six. This confirms that Gibson understood the nature of British citizenship in Camden and how he successfully combined patriotism with giving to the Plan and thus support for the paper. In the minds of these donors Gibson had confirmed that the continued survival of the *Camden Advertiser* was an imperial imperative, and their donations were an act of fiscal patriotism.

Unlike other fundraising associated with the Camden WVS, such as the British Mobile Canteen Fund Appeal, there was a wide level of support from the Camden Catholic community for the Plan. For instance, in the first week of September 1940 the largest donations of six shillings came from members of the local Catholic community.¹¹⁰ In the first sixteen months of the Plan the Catholic community contributed 21 per cent of the total number of donations, which was comparable to their proportion of the Camden population at 24 per cent. Families such as the Skinners made fifteen separate donations in the first sixteen months, and many other working class Catholic families in Camden gave regularly to the Plan, if only in small amounts. As outlined above, Gibson gave fair treatment to the Catholic community and in return they helped ensure the survival of his newspaper. As a free paper it was easily accessible for Camden's working class Catholics, with short pithy articles. It reflected the working class culture of the area and was the voice of Camden's underdog. The *Advertiser* was the only public voice in Camden that gave any significant support to the area's Catholic community, especially in the western part of the region and Burraborang Valley, where the paper was widely distributed. In contrast, Sidman's *Camden News* was seen as the voice of the Camden's Protestants and gave extensive coverage to the events of their institutions. The less

^{109.} Donations to War-Time Plan and Honor Roll in *Camden Advertiser*. *Camden Advertiser*, 16 January 1941.

^{110.} *Camden Advertiser*, 5 September 1940.

than enthusiastic support by the Catholic community for the Canteen Fund Appeal could be attributed to its organisation by Camden's Protestant elite and the amount of press coverage it received in the *News*.

Conclusion

The men's activities in this chapter have shown the subtle variations that existed in Camden wartime voluntarism, the role of gender expectations, the power and influence of social status and the role of Britishness as part of Camden's rural ideology.

The British crisis at Dunkirk, combined with the Battle of Britain and the beginning of Blitz in 1940, acted as a catalyst for Camden's British nationalism that was 'gingered up' by Arthur Gibson through the *Camden Advertiser*, and George Sidman in the *Camden News*. Both proprietors used imperial rhetoric to prompt a response from Camden's male population, like Sidman's statements in his paper that led to the creation of the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association. Gibson was no less enthusiastic and gave a discount on patriotic advertising for the WVS, VAD and Red Cross, which eventually led to the War-Time Plan.

Both Gibson and Sidman considered that the conflict was an imperial war, and as British citizens, they would do their best to foster imperial patriotism and British nationalism whenever, and where ever they could through their papers. Both newspapers acted as a vehicle for British nationalism and used fiscal patriotism to encourage the community to support British war interests in Camden. Both newspaper owners felt that British organisations, like the WVS, VAD and Red Cross, were an integral part of Camden's patriotic war effort. It was through this process that both newspapers actively disseminated the service culture of the WVS to their readerships throughout the district.

The response by Arthur Gibson, an 'outsider', to the war was guided by his own sense of righteousness and a belief that the war was a just one. Within this context patriotism was one of the responsibilities that went with imperial citizenship. Hence

he encouraged individuals to fulfil their civic obligations and responsibilities by supporting patriotic activities. He carried out these practices within Camden's rural ideology, supporting Camden's existing social divisions and the region's identity. Gibson used the *Camden Advertiser* to solicit support for the homefront war effort from the local community through the various facets of patriotism, particularly his War-Time Plan.

All Camden's male voluntarism occurred in Camden's public space, including those activities outlined in this chapter. Under the regime of Camden's conservatism, patriarchy and rural ideology, the men conducted their activities in the public arena and the women of the WVS willing volunteered to support the male activities in an auxiliary or secondary role. What was more significant was how the women of the WVS stepped in, even defended, and preserved the activities that the men would have preferred to have forgotten, such as the Soldiers' Recreation Room. This did no credit for Camden's male elite, who appeared only to be interested in the kudos they could derive from these activities. When the status of a patriotic activity declined they lost interest. Both the soldier's farewells and the Soldiers Recreation Room reflected poorly on the staying power of Camden's male elite. On the other hand, an 'outsider', Arthur Gibson provided extensive publicity and support for the WVS. He was able to overcome the inherent hostility of Camden's rural ideology to 'outsiders' through a sincere and genuine attempt to foster local causes. In this respect he embraced the area's rural ideology and became a 'local'.

An extension of the use of public space by male voluntarism was its independent status relative to Camden's female voluntarism. Patriarchy demanded that Camden's male organisations, like the WVS Men's Auxiliary, could not be seen to be under the control of a women's group. Therefore it was quite understandable that the WVS Men's Auxiliary failed in part because its status was secondary to that of the women of the WVS. This was in spite of the fact that men's organisations deferred to, offered assistance to and paid respect to the expertise of women's organisations, like the WVS, on soldier welfare issues. Both the Camden District Soldiers' and Citizens' Association and the RSSAILA were in this position. Members of the Camden elite even solicited members of the female elite from the WVS when they felt it was in the interests of Camden servicemen, for instance the War-Time trust fund, and yet these same women willingly adopted a secondary role to the men at their functions, such as the soldier's farewells.

Camden's Non-conformists, especially the Methodists, exercised a considerable amount of social authority in Camden out of all proportion to their numbers in the broader community. They had a strong tradition of reform and voluntarism in Britain and Camden and this appeared in men's voluntarism. Their influence, especially amongst Camden's elite, was reinforced by individuals from this group occupying key positions in Camden, such as, Stan Kelloway, the mayor and George Sidman, the owner of the *Camden News*. Sidman's support was essential if a wartime activity was to receive any amount of publicity in his newspaper. His influence flowed through in his opposition to alcohol and the creation of a dry canteen in the form of the Soldiers' Recreation Room.

The role of men's voluntarism in Camden gives a glimpse into the wide influence the WVS had within the Camden community and how it connected with the town's Britishness and its rural ideology. The voluntary service ethos of the WVS was based on British nationalism and imperial patriotism, and this helped its immediate acceptance by the Camden community. The social authority of the women of the WVS on matters concerning soldier welfare infiltrated the broader community, and was greater than even the women were prepared to admit at times. The WVS did not need to advertise their presence to exercise considerable social influence over the remainder of the community. Such is the nature of small communities.

CHAPTER NINE

'PUT AN ARM AROUND OUR CAMDEN GIRLS'

YMCA-ACF HOSPITALITY CENTRE

The Hospitality Centre¹ was the most important war-related activity in Camden after 1944, and highlighted the dynamic nature of Camden's voluntarism and the social changes brought about by the war. The Centre represented a change in Camden's wartime volunteering, particularly in the absence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, and in the process illustrated the multi-dimensional nature of the WVS voluntary service ethos. It also reflected the acceptance of 'outsiders' and 'blow ins' in a local patriotic activity, the personal service commitment of volunteers, and the related issues of female sexuality and its impact on the mythology that developed around airmen from both the RAF and the RAAF in the Camden area. In addition, the foundation of the Centre was influenced by role of Camden's Methodists and their reaction to Sunday drinking and public displays of drunkenness. And the Centre was yet another example of the influence of the Camden WVS in the wider community and how its members volunteered for non-WVS related activities.²

YMCA-ACF Hospitality Centre

In January 1944 there was a serious deterioration in the relationship between the military and civilian populations of Camden. This was caused by the invasion of the town by a large number of 'beer hunters' from Sydney, which managed to arouse Camden's wowserism. In January 1944, on a hot summer's afternoon, 'hundreds' of servicemen arrived in Camden from Sydney, intent on asserting their rights as travellers, and finding a drink at a local hotel over two consecutive Sundays.³ What

¹ In many respects the Centre was similar to a variety canteens organised by the WVS in Great Britain, and other welfare organisations in Australia. A similar facility had been established in Campbelltown in July 1942 and operated by the Women's Auxiliary of the Campbelltown branch of the RSSAILA. *Camden News*, 9 July 1942, 16 July 1942.

² *Camden News*, 12 December 1945, 20 December 1945.

³ The reported number of servicemen was 300. *Camden Advertiser*, 20 January 1944. On a subsequent Sunday the *Camden Advertiser* reported the number of servicemen was 400. *Camden*

resulted were public scenes of drunkenness by men and a 'number of women... ranging from "swaying" drunk to "staggering" drunk [and] language [that] "blued" the air'.⁴ It was reported that there were 'filthy conditions' around Camden railway station, and one local woman described her trip on the train to Sydney as a 'nightmare'. Most of the revellers came from Auburn, Liverpool, Parramatta and Granville, with quite a few Americans servicemen, and 'fairly stormed two local hotels' on their arrival. JW Clinton, an alderman on Camden Municipal Council, reported that he had been at Campbelltown when the crowd arrived there by train, where they were told that 'there was no beer in Campbelltown and [they] should go to Camden'.⁵

Complaints were made to Camden's Methodist mayor, Stan Kelloway,⁶ by the Methodist minister, Wesley Stocks,⁷ and a member of Camden's Sons of Temperance, Albert Huthnance, a fellow Methodist.⁸ The *Camden Advertiser* stated that these events were a 'challenge [to] common decency' and that the paper would 'continue in the fight until the racket [was] utterly smashed'.⁹ What followed was a heavy-handed police crackdown, which resulted in eleven arrests: two civilians, one woman, seven Allied servicemen and an Australian soldier.¹⁰ They were all 'outsiders'.

A special sitting of the Camden court was held with George Sidman, JP, Methodist, the owner of the *Camden News*, and a man of ultra-conservative views presiding on the bench. Sidman stated that 'I have been in Camden for 50 years and I have never seen such disgraceful scenes'.¹¹ Two soldiers from the Sydney area pleaded guilty to a number of charges and were fined, and two civilians were ordered to appear at a

Advertiser, 3 February 1944.

Camden Advertiser, 20 January 1944.

The origin of the servicemen was ascertained by investigating the source of their railway tickets.

Camden Advertiser, 20 January 1944, 27 January 1944; *Camden News* 27 January 1944..

H.S. (Stan) Kelloway was elected mayor in 1938-1953. He was an alderman on Camden Municipal Council for 38 years, founder of Camden Cricket Club in 1922, president and founder of Wollondilly District Rugby Football League, president of Camden District Tennis Association, financial secretary of Loyal Morning Star Lodge (MUIOOF) 1914-1940, bandmaster of Camden District Band, founding president in 1924 of Camden United Friendly Societies Association and District Coroner from 1936. Jervis, *The Story of Camden*, p. 15. Wrigley, *Camden Characters*, p. 21.

Camden News, 27 January 1944.

Camden News, 17 February 1944. It should be noted that the Sons of Temperance only four members. Mason, Carinya, p. 220.

Camden Advertiser, 27 January 1944.

Camden Advertiser, 3 February 1944.

ibid.

later date.¹² The police constable, Henry Haylock, stated that 'it has been almost impossible for decent people, particularly girls, to travel on the trains'.¹³ In summing up, Sidman said that,

It is impossible for me to take a lenient view of these cases. Men who have served their country should know better. Their conduct should be an example to other people. That these offences should occur while our sons are away fighting makes them doubly serious. What has occurred at Camden has been an insult to our citizens and to our lady friends. I had two lady friends staying at my place recently. They are in the services and they had to catch a Sunday evening train to return to duty. What they had to suffer in that train was indescribably disgraceful.¹⁴

Sidman hoped that this action 'would guarantee there would be no repetition', and he assured the court that 'such scenes... must be stopped'.¹⁵ At a subsequent police court hearing, a number of charges were heard against several men who pleaded guilty, were fined and ordered to pay costs.¹⁶ All these events were reported in the *Camden News's* sister paper, the *Campbelltown News*, but were not considered important enough to make Sydney's major daily newspapers. Despite the moral outrage on the part of Camden's Methodists there were no recorded protests from anyone else.

¹² James Williams, 38, private, AIF, had been charged with offensive behaviour and resisting arrest. Milton John Smith, 42, labourer of Desmond Street, Merrylands was charged with having incited Williams to resist. Both men pleaded guilty to the charges. Sergeant W Bowerman pointed out that Williams had been a soldier in the AIF for four years. Williams, in his own defence, stated that he had 'been in and out of hospital since I came back from Milne Bay'. Smith, in his defence, maintained as well that he had been away at war for four years. Smith was fined £5, and Williams was fined 30/- on each charge. A young woman and a male civilian, who had been arrested at the same time, had been bailed on Sunday night and were not required to appear in court. *Camden Advertiser*, 3 February 1944.

¹³ *Camden Advertiser*, 3 February 1944.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Camden News*, 3 February 1944.

¹⁶ The hearing, on Thursday, 17 February 1944, was presided over by Mr A.B. Collins, police magistrate, who heard that a number of men had been drinking at the Royal Hotel in Camden at 3.45pm on Sunday, 30 January 1944. The defendants came from Paddington, Annandale, Ashfield, Granville, Parramatta and Merrylands. The five initially pleaded not guilty, but later altered their plea to guilty, and all were fined 20/- and 8/- costs. A defendant, from Dundas, who failed to appear was fined 25/- and 8/- costs. Sergeant W.H. Bowerman, of Camden, stated to the magistrate that 120 men, including servicemen, were in the hotel at the time. When one man was questioned by Bowerman, he said 'I came to Camden to have a few drinks. I travelled 30 miles and am entitled to it'. In summing up the magistrate stated 'People are not entitled to drink at an hotel on a Sunday, even though they may have travelled more than 25 miles, if the purpose of their journey was one to obtain liquor. *Camden Advertiser*, 24 February 1944.

However, these events confirmed all the worst fears of urbanism that were an inherent part of Camden's rural ideology, particular those surrounding the 'wanton women'. Modernism had produced one type a stereotypical woman who inhabited 'the city', and she was 'long-legged, voluptuous and often of uncertain morals... promiscuous, silly and hungry for money'.¹⁷ These were the images that were presented to the Camden community at the movies, as well as advertising in magazines and newspapers. On this occasion they were combined with alcohol and public displays of drunkenness by women, which particularly offended the sensibilities of Camden's Methodists.

The one-dimensional response of Camden's conservatives to this social and moral crisis obviously did not impress the local military authorities in the Camden area, especially those in the RAAF. Flight Lieutenant EH Wray thought that a more sophisticated response was needed to the situation that threatened the convivial relations between the RAAF personnel at Camden aerodrome and the civilian population of the town. He felt that there was a serious need for some type of recreational facility in the area for servicemen.¹⁸ Wray requested Camden Municipal Council to call a public meeting to discuss the matter. Wray had the foresight to see that these events, while not involving personnel under his command, could easily destroy the goodwill that had developed between the RAAF and the local community. Wray's prescient move was quickly supported by the Camden WVS, Red Cross, CWA, RSSAILA and the ACF.¹⁹

A public meeting was convened by the mayor on 23 February, and brought together for the first and only time in Camden, the RAAF, the Sydney YMCA and the Australian Comforts Fund. These latter two organisations were amongst the most important soldier welfare bodies in New South Wales, running a large number of welfare and recreational facilities at military camps throughout Australia and overseas. They obviously felt that the relations between the Camden community and the local military were under serious threat. The speakers, who were all 'outsiders', were EH Wray, the commanding officer of the RAAF Base, HC Easton, RAAF

17. Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, p. 75.

18. *Camden News*, 17 February 1944. Miss Mitchell from the Australian Comforts Fund on a visit to Camden offered to supply £50 worth 'of games and equipment'. *Camden Advertiser*, 17 February 1944.

19. *Camden News*, 17 February 1944.

padre,²⁰ Miss Michelle from the Australian Comforts Fund²¹ and from the Sydney YMCA, assistant commissioner for New South Wales, HT King, and the area field officer, A Asboe. The Sydney YMCA, in conjunction with the Australian Comforts Fund and the Salvation Army, ran a large number of welfare and recreational facilities at military camps throughout Australia and overseas.²²

Those amongst the large crowd who attended the meeting listened attentively to the speakers, but it took over two hours of persuasion to convince the audience of a need for some type of canteen, recreation and rest room for servicemen in Camden.²³ The initial reticence of the Camden community to the proposal was caused by a natural cautiousness to new ideas based on local conservatism, as well as the absence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow and the natural leadership she provided on matters of public importance. As has been discussed earlier, Macarthur Onslow's imprimatur was sought on most social matters that affected the town, and without it, the cautious response of the audience was quite predictable. The proposal tentatively supported by the meeting was for a 'dry canteen' to 'be open daily, including each night, when hostesses would attend and provide refreshments, [such as] tea, [and] coffee, free of charge'. It would also have 'games, reading matter and writing facilities'. The meeting recommended that the proposal be accepted on the basis of a one-month trial, on condition that 'the [RAAF] Camp Welfare Fund' met 'all expenses', and the 'canteen' be located in a vacant shop.²⁴ Even at this early stage there was a general acknowledgment by the supporters of the scheme that its eventual success rested on the participation of local women to act as 'hostesses'. The women would be the main attraction for servicemen. This was based on the experience of the Sydney YMCA successfully managing similar centres in Sydney and Lismore.²⁵ And unlike the other occasions discussed in the thesis when the views of 'outsiders' were rejected by the Camden community, this time they were acceptable: their motives were sincere and had the best interests of the community at heart. It neatly matched Camden's rural ideology.

²⁰. *Camden News*, 24 February 1944.

²¹. *Camden Advertiser*, 17 February 1944.

²². The YMCA of Sydney was given responsibility in New South Wales to provide a military camp service from 1939. The YMCA established a social and recreational centres in each military camp. This was funded by the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund (the New South Wales Division of the Australian Comforts Fund). By the end of the 1939 the YMCA had centres at Rutherford, Showground, Ingleburn, Dapto, Glenfield, Warwick Farm, Menangle, and Greta. YMCA, *86th Annual Report*, p. 13.

²³. *Camden News*, 24 February 1944.

²⁴. The shop was owned by owned by Harold Fumer. *Camden News*, 24 February 1944.

²⁵. YMCA, *Annual Report 1944*, pp. 43-44.

The meeting appointed a provisional committee which was composed of seven women and one man, who was a 'blow in'.²⁶ The women were drawn from Camden's principal women's organisations and came from Camden's lower-middle and working class. There were no members of the Camden elite amongst any of these organisers. Within the committee overlapping membership was important. Seven women were members of the Camden WVS, six were members of the Camden Red Cross, two were members of the Camden CWA and two were members of the Camden CWA Younger Set. Two women were members of the WVS, Red Cross, Hospital Auxiliary and CWA, while a further five were members of at least two of these organisations. When the permanent management committee was elected these women were relegated to an auxiliary role of organising the roster under the supervision of an 'outsider, the RAAF padre's wife, Mrs Easton.

The Centre was officially opened in March 1944²⁷ on the first floor of the Empire Hall²⁸ in what was formerly the Empire Sports Club (a billiard room).²⁹ The opening was conducted by Rupert de V Kidston, the Sydney YMCA commissioner, in the 'presence of a large gathering of servicemen and citizens'.³⁰ Other speakers included A Asboe, the Sydney YMCA area field officer, Squadron Leader Lonergan and Flight Lieutenant Wray representing the RAAF, and Lieutenant Graham representing Brigadier Douglas from the Army, all 'outsiders'. The speeches were followed by a servicemen's dance and a collection successfully raised £12.³¹ Dances became a regular fundraiser for the Centre and were organised at the Empire Hall in Camden on the second Tuesday of every month.³² Additional dances were organised between September and November by the 'Camden Girls' committee, who raised

26. Claudia Beazley, Mrs G. Dickinson, Mrs F. Dunk, Mrs Easton, Mrs C. Evans, Mrs A. Gibson, Mrs Osborne, Joyce Pulling, Mrs Rix, Mrs Sparks, Mr J. Stibbard, the manager the Bank of New South Wales, Mrs E. Williams. *Camden News*, 22 February 1944.

27. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

28. The entrance was from a stairway in Oxley street. Fumer's shop was rejected because the lavatory was 'inadequate' and it had no 'water, gas, electric stove, basin or counter'. The Agricultural, Horticultural & Industrial Society Hall was considered, but also rejected. *Camden News*, 2 March 1944.

29. The proprietor of the Club was H. (Snowy) Brown. *Camden News*, 1 June 1939.

30. Kidson formed the Defence Forces Committee of the Sydney YMCA and arranged co-operative relationships with the Australian Comforts Fund, which provided funds for huts at military camps. Massey, *The YMCA In Australia*, p. 516.

31. *Camden Advertiser*, 16 March 1944, 16 March 1944.

32. For example, a dance on Tuesday 13 June 1944. 'Dancing was from 8:00pm to Mrs Kelloway's Orchestra on a 'good dance floor'. Admission was 2/-'. *Camden Advertiser*, 8 June 1944.

over £85, which amounted to 8 per cent of the Centre's total income.³³ Other fundraisers for the Centre included street stalls, which were held on the second Saturday of every month from May 1945.³⁴ Concerts at the Paramount Theatre attracted large crowds of servicemen. Three concerts held between June 1944 and March 1945 raised over £180, which amounted to 18 per cent of the Centre's total income.³⁵

Overall management of the Hospitality Centre was the responsibility of A Asboe, the local representative of the Sydney YMCA. Asboe was the chairman of the Centre's management committee and responsible for Centre activities and fundraising.³⁶ This was part of his role as area field officer, where he was responsible for recreation huts jointly run by the Sydney YMCA and Salvation Army at the Narellan military camp, the RAAF Base at Menangle Park racecourse and the Ingleburn army camp from 1942-1944.³⁷ The YMCA movement, like the WVS, had a strong service ethic based on Christian principles of charity, represented by the red colour in the triangular YMCA emblem. Red was 'the blood colour', and represented 'the

³³ The September dance was at the Empire Hall and raised £25/12/3. Admission was 2/- and music was supplied by the RAF Orchestra, with dancing from 8:30pm to 12:15pm. This committee organised two more dances in October (Tuesday, 9 October, 1945, which netted £15/7/6 and was attended by over 100 people, and 23 October 1945), and one in November (27 November 1945) and raised over £60 for the Centre. The organisers were Gladys Clissold, Valda Clissold, Peggy Hayter, Pat Hider, Pat Hynes, Joan Roberts, Mary Sparks, Phyllis Watson, Violet Wheeler. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 September 1945, 27 September 1945, 18 October 1945, 22 November 1945.

³⁴ The Centre committee also sold various items including buttons for the Australian Comforts Fund. *Camden Advertiser*, 10 May 1945; *Camden News*, 17 May 1945.

³⁵ The Centre committee organised a 'Variety Military Camp Concert' at the Paramount Theatre in Camden on Tuesday 20 June 1944. A record for the Paramount Theatre of 374 seats were reserved for the concert. Door takings amounted to £86/3/0, less expenses, gave a net balance of £76/1/0. *Camden Advertiser*, 8 June 1944, 22 June 1944. In November the committee organised a variety show with the Rural Bank Camp Concert Party at the Paramount Theatre on Tuesday, 7 November 1944. The concert was considered 'first class' by the *Advertiser's* correspondent, who reported that there was a 'large' audience for the players who gave their time on a voluntary basis. Mr McKellar reported that the function netted £47/7/8. The reporter for the *Camden News* reported that there was 500 in the audience and 26 acts in the programme. *Camden Advertiser*, 2 November 1944, 9 November 1944, 16 November 1944; *Camden News*, 16 November 1944. In March 1945, the Centre committee organised a concert with 'The Legionnaires' at the Paramount Theatre on Tuesday 6 March 1945. They were a popular camp concert party which had completed 370 shows at army camps. The concert received 'spontaneous and sustained applause' from 630 people who attended the show, according the report in the *Camden Advertiser*. The artists gave their time in a voluntary capacity and were entertained with supper at the Hospitality Centre after the show. Net takings amounted to £57/10/-. *Camden Advertiser*, 8 February 1945, 15 March 1945; *Camden News*, 13 March 1945. A camp concert was held on Tuesday 18 July 1944 and organised by A Asboe. *Camden News*, 20 July 1944. In August the management committee organised a play 'The First Mrs Fraser' at the Paramount Theatre, produced by May Hollingworth with Alatheia Siddons, Kevin Brennan, Margo Graeme and Alfred Race. Reserved seats were 3/-, general admission 2/-, children 1/- and service personnel free. *Camden Advertiser*, 17 August 1944.

³⁶ YMCA, *87th Annual Report*, p. 15.

³⁷ Letter, J.T.H. to I.C.W., 23 September 1999.

sacrificial service ideals of the YMCA which seek to lay down its life rather than safeguard it'. The activities of the YMCA, which were guided by these Christian values, provided opportunities for men to grow in 'Body, Mind and Spirit'.³⁸ According to the Sydney YMCA their field officers possessed a 'keen desire to render Christian service, capacity for leadership, energy, enthusiasm and a personality that inspires friendship and confidence, together with undoubted Christian character'.³⁹ This certainly fitted the profile of Asboe, who was a First World War veteran, a minister of religion and 'a very gentle and caring person'.⁴⁰ He was also pragmatic and aware of the practicalities of dealing with large numbers of service personnel.

The Hospitality Centre's permanent management committee was appointed in March 1944 and again consisted mainly of 'outsiders', such as the RAAF padre and his wife, and 'blow ins', who included the manager of the Bank of New South Wales and the wife of the manager of the Rural Bank. By December 1944, the committee had been expanded to an executive committee of six, and a general committee of fourteen, with representatives from the RAAF, the Army and Camden's Methodist and Church of England churches.⁴¹ The number of 'locals' had grown, but still did not include any of the Camden elite. The secretary of the Centre was the local bank manager, and the vice-president was the rector of St Johns Church of England, the Reverend AH Kirk, both 'blow ins'. Kirk was English born, educated at a private school and had seen active service as an army padre in New Guinea in 1942-1943.⁴² Men like Kirk had a strong commitment to service and, like Asboe, provided a strong affiliation with the servicemen who visited the Centre. Amongst the permanent

^{38.} This is represented by the Biblical passage from Ephesians 4:11-13, 'Christ chose some of us to be apostles, prophets, missionaries, pastors and teachers, so that his people would learn to serve and his body would grow strong. This will continue until we are united by our faith and by our understanding of the Son of God. Then we will be mature just as Christ is, and we will be completely like him.' Massey, *The YMCA In Australia*, pp. 128-130.

^{39.} YMCA, *88th Annual Report*, p. 14.

^{40.} Asboe lived at Concord, a Sydney suburb, and owned a panel van which he drove home each night. Letter, G.F. (2/AIF, Narellan military camp, 1940) to I.C.W., 21 June 1999.

^{41.} Committee members were E.J. Rogers (YMCA, president), Reverend A.H. Kirk (vice-president), Harold W. McKellar (secretary), Mrs C. Evans (treasurer & roster secretary), Mrs M. Osborne (librarian), A.G. Gibson (auditor), and Claudia Beazley, Mrs W. Clifton, Mrs G. Dickinson, Mrs F.W. Dunk, J.N. Dunk, C. Evans, Mrs A.G. Gibson, Flight Lieutenant C.H. Hamilton (RAAF), Mrs A.E. Rix, Mrs L. Shiels, Mrs M. Sparks, Reverend Wesley Stocks, Muriel Whiteman and Mrs S.J. Williams (general committee). *Camden Advertiser*, 14 December 1944.

^{42.} Reverend A.H. Kirk, ThL, was born in Bedford, England, educated at Ridley College, Melbourne, ordained at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne and later assisted at St Jude's Church of England, Randwick. He was army padre in New Guinea in 1942-43 (enlisted in February 1941) and inducted at St John's Church of England, Camden, 20 April 1944. *Camden Advertiser*, 20 April 1944, 4 May 1944.

committee, ten were members of the WVS, eleven were from the Red Cross, and three from the CWA. Two women were members of all four organisations, another four were members of at least three organisations and another five were members of at least two organisations. If the representatives of the YMCA and RAAF are excluded 55 per cent of the committee were members of the WVS, Red Cross or Hospital Auxiliary, matching the pattern of overlapping memberships already discussed in the thesis.

There were regular changes in the Centre's permanent management committee through military and civilian transfers to and from the Camden area. The Sydney YMCA transferred their field officers, as did the RAAF, the Army and the banks. During August 1944 Harold McKellar, manager of the Commercial Bank, replaced Jack Stibbard, the manager of the Bank of New South Wales, as secretary, who was transferred to Gilgandra. Reverend AD Kirk replaced Padre Easton as vice-president, who was transferred to an RAAF operational base.⁴³ The Sydney YMCA transferred Asboe, who was replaced by EJ Rogers.⁴⁴ In January 1945, a new representative was appointed from the RAAF and Sydney YMCA, with further changes in March 1945.⁴⁵

Apart from the support of George Sidman, the Camden elite did not become involved in either the Hospitality Centre's management or its operations. Their reluctance can be partly attributed to the death of Macarthur Onslow, seven months previously. Her death was a watershed in Camden's history and sent shockwaves through the community. On her death the *Camden News* quoted the address by Reverend F de Witt Batty, Lord Bishop of Newcastle. He maintained that

her passing creates an unfillable gap in the lives of all who were privileged to know her well, and especially in this town and in this district in which she was born, and in which she spent so large a part of her life. If I read your

⁴³ In August 1944 Padre H.C. Easton was transferred by the RAAF, and Mary Evans replaced his wife as the roster convenor. *Camden Advertiser*, 17 August 1944.

⁴⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 14 December 1944.

⁴⁵ In January 1945 two new members were elected to the committee of the centre, Wing Commander Newstead, RAAF, and 'Scotty' Wilson, YMCA, Narellan. *Camden Advertiser*, 18 January 1945. In March 1945 Flight Lieutenant R.L. Sillett, Welfare Officer (RAAF) and his wife joined the committee. Sillett served with the 3rd Brigade Light Horse, AIF, in the 1914-18 war. *Camden Advertiser*, 15 March 1945.

thoughts alright you are all feeling that Camden and its neighbourhood can never be the same again for you now that she has gone.⁴⁶

Her death created a power vacuum amongst the Camden elite. They were effectively leaderless and had not had sufficient time to re-group. The Camden community bore the loss of Macarthur Onslow in a 'stoical and reserved response' that, according to Jalland, was typical of how Australian society in the 1940s remained silent, and repressed grief through a 'denial of death'.⁴⁷ The Camden elite were particularly aware of their 'obligation and duty' to be restrained in their grieving⁴⁸ as natural leaders of the local community. Her death put a shadow over the town and added to the grief caused by the loss of local men killed in action. Sibella and before her, her mother Elizabeth, had controlled female philanthropy in Camden for sixty-one years. Elsie Jefferis, the new president of the Red Cross, lacked Sibella's social status or authority and was unable to fill the void. The Camden Red Cross withered under her leadership. Rita Tucker would eventually emerge as the natural successor to Sibella within Camden's female philanthropy.

Apart from Macarthur Onslow's death a number of other factors contributed to the reluctance of the elite to join the Centre. Firstly, they saw little prestige to be gained from an organisation that was dominated by 'outsiders' and 'blow ins', or one that had been initiated by an incident that involved the public use and misuse of alcohol, immoral behaviour and drunken women. As mentioned earlier, Camden's rural ideology was antagonistic to 'city-types' represented by these urban stereotypes, and drunken women would have been seen as a threat to the morals of the Camden community. Camden's female elite saw themselves as the protectors of Camden's private space, and the traditional female virtues of purity, sobriety and motherhood.⁴⁹ For them the Hospitality Centre was outside the traditional role of Camden female philanthropy, where they could gain the appropriate kudos from their actions and support their social status. As well, the Centre was not a direct extension of a Camden-based-British organisation, and therefore lacked the cultural and patriotic nationalism that went with wartime volunteering of British origins. Even the tradition of service fostered by Camden's Victorianness or the WVS service ethos seemed insufficient, on this occasion, to encourage the female elite to become

⁴⁶ *Camden News*, 22 July 1943.

⁴⁷ Jalland, *Australian Ways of Death*, p. 305.

⁴⁸ Damousi, *Living With the Aftermath*, pp.4-5.

⁴⁹ Carol Bacchi, 'First-wave feminism: history's judgement', in Grieve and Grimshaw, *Australian Women*, p. 158.

involved with the Centre. On the other hand, Macarthur Onslow's death seems not to have affected the sensibilities of Camden's lower classes in the same way and, as already noted, they became quite involved in running of the Centre. Perhaps the members of Camden's lower classes saw Macarthur Onslow's death as a release from the enforced deference that her presence in Camden demanded and that had been a constant part of their daily lives.

The ultimate success of the Centre, which functioned as a 'dry canteen', rested on its ability to attract servicemen away from Camden's hotels. To achieve this the Sydney YMCA and Australian Comforts Fund jointly purchased 'the complete equipment' of the Empire Sports Club, 'including two billiards table'.⁵⁰ The owner of the building had 'generously offered to provide the premises rent free for the first month'.⁵¹ The 'spacious room' was completely 'renovated' and presented 'a pleasant appearance'. It was 'well furnished with a lounge-suite, easy chairs, occasional tables, and recreational facilities [including] a large-size billiards table, ping-pong set, bobs and other table games'.⁵² The library contained books, magazines and newspapers,⁵³ and a piano⁵⁴ and a radio set were purchased later.⁵⁵ All services were 'provided entirely free to all servicemen',⁵⁶ and Asboe claimed that the Centre would be 'a credit to the town'.⁵⁷

Asboe also knew that he needed the support and participation of Camden's young women, who would be the principal attraction for lonely servicemen. Women would be the 'bait' that would draw the men away from Camden's hotels. This would be achieved, so Asboe claimed, by providing 'friendship, good fellowship and service' in a comfortable atmosphere.⁵⁸ More importantly, he claimed that

what gives tone and homeliness to this service is the hospitality so generously provided in the band of voluntary helpers. These hostesses and their teams of refined popular girls mix freely with the men, join in their

⁵⁰ The Sydney YMCA and ACF purchased equipment from Maurice Williams for £175. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

⁵¹ The owner of the building was Phillip Fox. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

⁵² The description by A. Asboe, Sydney YMCA area officer. *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

⁵³ *Camden Advertiser*, 16 November 1944.

⁵⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 6 April 1944.

⁵⁵ *Camden Advertiser*, 16 November 1944.

⁵⁶ *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

games, converse, and serve light suppers free of charge on daintily set-out trays.⁵⁹

The female stereotype that Asboe wanted to project at the Centre was of 'the girl next door' who was 'sweet, innocent... virginal, domesticated and not too bright'.⁶⁰ The image looked backwards to Victorian femininity and the 'ideals of service' that were an integral part of Camden's rural ideology. Asboe also maintained that service personnel in the Camden area 'hungered' for 'homelike contacts', which he thought could only partly be provided by the Centre.⁶¹ He also wanted Camden residents to invite servicemen and servicewomen into their homes,⁶² and to achieve this the Centre committee organised 'accommodation' and 'House-letting facilities' for servicemen in Camden township.⁶³

Within two months of opening the *Camden Advertiser* reported that

the happy nightly gatherings of servicemen at the... Centre have definitely answered the question of the value of its establishment'.⁶⁴

Harold McKellar, the secretary of the management committee, maintained that the Sydney YMCA considered the Centre 'one of the very best in the State',⁶⁵ and as far as the *Camden Advertiser* was concerned the Centre met 'all tastes',⁶⁶ and was a complete 'success'.⁶⁷ McKellar confirmed the female stereotype that Asboe was trying to project for the Centre, when he stated that 'many ladies... devotedly and regularly waited on the boys with... their own home dainties'.⁶⁸ This accorded with Tinkler's view of women 'providing a comfortable and comforting home environment for fathers and brothers', which could be expressed 'through philanthropic work inspired by humanitarian and spiritual concerns'.⁶⁹

⁵⁹ ibid.

⁶⁰ Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, p. 75.

⁶¹ *Camden News*, 16 November 1944.

⁶² *Camden Advertiser*, 9 November 1944.

⁶³ *Camden News*, 16 November 1944.

⁶⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 6 April 1944.

⁶⁵ *Camden Advertiser*, 16 November 1944.

⁶⁶ The description by A. Asboe, Sydney YMCA area officer. *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

⁶⁷ *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

⁶⁸ *Camden News*, 20 December 1945.

⁶⁹ Tinkler, 'At Your Service', p. 354.

The Hospitality Centre represented the re-emergence of a pattern in Camden female philanthropy where femininity was concerned with a sexualisation of female volunteering. It had started with the Camden VAs and continued at the Centre where there was broader social spectrum. The Centre used female sexuality as a commodity to attract servicemen, who were also 'outsiders'. This process happened under the influence of modernity and was part of a subtle shift in female volunteering away from the Victorianess associated with the influence of Macarthur Onslow. This was the first time in Camden's wartime volunteering that female sexuality was used as one of the key principles in conducting a patriotic activity. Notwithstanding this, it was never envisaged by the Centre's female volunteers that their service would take place outside the social constraints of Camden's rural ideology or its conservatism.

Volunteers

From the beginning the Hospitality Centre had no trouble attracting volunteers. This marked a general acceptance of the Centre by the Camden community, and at its opening in March 1944 over 100 volunteers 'enthusiastically' put their names forward 'to assist'.⁷⁰ However, in the first month only sixty actually materialised,⁷¹ but by June this had increased to 118, 'comprising 43 matrons [and] 75 girls'. The numbers of volunteers again dropped and by November there were only eighty-six 'Camden ladies', but the volunteers now included '20 ex-Servicemen [doing] splendid work'.⁷² The 'abundance of helpers' in April 1945 meant that the Camden CWA could withdraw its support to the Centre without embarrassment, after initially supplying eight volunteers.⁷³ Asboe claimed that all the volunteers were 'a very fine band of workers'.⁷⁴

A roster of volunteers was drawn up by a committee under the direction of Mrs Easton, the wife of the RAAF padre, HC Easton.⁷⁵ A meeting of Camden's 'local ladies' was held at the town hall⁷⁶ and a roster committee of six women was elected

^{70.} *Camden Advertiser*, 16 March 1944.

^{71.} *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

^{72.} *Camden News*, 16 November 1944.

^{73.} Camden CWA, Minutes, 17 April 1945, 22 May 1945.

^{74.} *Camden Advertiser*, 15 June 1944.

^{75.} *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

^{76.} The meeting was held on Friday 10 March 1944. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

from those present. The women were predominantly from the Centre's original provisional committee,⁷⁷ and came from Camden's lower-middle and working class. Two were members of the WVS, two from the Red Cross, three were members of the Camden Hospital Women's Auxiliary, and one from the CWA. Doreen Rix was a member of all four and two of the women were members of two of these organisations.⁷⁸ The absence of the Camden elite in this committee, was a further reflection of their general lack of support for the entire venture.

The Centre operated from Tuesday, 14 March 1944⁷⁹ to Tuesday, 14 May 1946.⁸⁰ It was open seven days per week (apart from closing for Christmas and New Year) with shifts Monday to Saturday from 5.00pm to 10.00pm, with light refreshments served between 9.00pm to 10.00pm, and Sundays from 3.00pm to 6.45pm.⁸¹ Initially the Centre committee felt that the Centre would not open on Sunday

in order not to clash with the churches which catered for the men every Sunday evening with suppers. It was also pointed out that few remained during weekends in camp, taking advantage of [time to travel] to Sydney.⁸²

After further consideration it was wisely decided to open seven days a week.⁸³ The initial hesitation regarding Sunday openings reflected a latent resistance to Sunday activities in Camden under the influence of the town's Methodists (see Chapter Two).⁸⁴

77. In March the elected committee consisted of A. Asboe (chairman), Padre Easton (vice-chairman), J. Stibbard (secretary), Mrs C. Evans (treasurer), Mrs Easton (roster convenor). *Camden News*, 2 March 1944.

78. The roster committee comprised Miss Dorrie Byrne, Mrs G. Dickinson, Mrs H.C. Easton, Mrs Noel Parker, Mrs A.E. Rix, Mrs Mary Sparkes. *Camden Advertiser*, 16 March 1944.

79. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

80. *Camden Advertiser*, 18 April 1946.

81. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 April 1944.

82. *Camden News*, 2 March 1944.

83. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 April 1944.

84. The Methodist community in Camden had been responsible for banning Sunday sport on Onslow Park (Camden Showground) in 1925. Sidman, *The Town of Camden*, p. 75. Even early in the war Albert Putland, Camden's Methodist Minister, protested about the playing of cricket on Sundays at Onslow Park in a letter to the *Camden News*. *Camden News* 13 March 1941. In 1943 protests against this Council policy were organised by a number of local men who attempted to organise Sunday sport for servicemen. The Council held a referendum, which overturned the policy, but the campaign generated some heated letters. One from 'Wowser', stated in part:

'The Bible tells us plainly that in six days God made heaven and earth and all that there is, and rested on the seventh day and 'Hallowed it'... Let us not forget God has issued us a warning if we disobey His laws He will punish us... He says 'vengeance is mine, I will repay'. There is yet another point to raise with Sunday sport and the many evils that too often are associated with it, such as drink, etc, what devastating effect it would have upon the future life of our boys and girls. Surely we want them to grow up with clean minds and good character. Therefore Sunday sport is a

George Sidman obligingly published the Hospitality Centre roster each week in the *Camden News* from its opening in March 1944. Sidman's strong support for the Centre indicated a desire on his part for its success, and that he now considered that it was an important part of town affairs. No doubt Sidman's support was based on his experience and comments (mentioned earlier) about the social crisis the town faced in January 1944 and the part he played in it. Sidman, who was always a strong advocate of Camden's wartime voluntary effort, was the first member of Camden's elite to openly support the Centre. His support was also an acknowledgment that, in this situation, 'outsiders' were best placed to manage the Centre, and had taken over the traditional role held by the Camden elite in organising a wartime activity.

Sidman's daughter, Phyllis, volunteered for service at the Centre from its opening, evidently with her parents approval. She undertook eighteen separate shifts between March 1944 and August 1945. In the end many other young women from Camden's upper-class families also volunteered for duty at the Centre. This created a paradox for female volunteering in Camden. On the one hand, the older members of the female elite did not become involved with the Centre, while on the other, their daughters did. The influence of modernity provides a partial explanation. Camden's young women volunteered for the Centre (and other organisations like the VAD) as an act of independence and an expression of their right to choose their own lifestyle. To this extent it differentiated them from their mothers.

An analysis of the Hospitality Centre roster reveals important characteristics about the volunteers, their motivation towards voluntary service, the division of gender roles and the general operation of the Centre. The expression of these characteristics at a personal level is then examined through the service commitment of two young female volunteers.

The roster was published in the *Camden News* for 103 weeks, a total of 684 days. There were a total of 201 individual volunteers, 179 women and twenty-two men

disgrace to our town, so let us rid ourselves of this Sabbath evil in our midst, and live to please God by obeying his laws.' *Camden News*, 5 August 1943. The debate over Sunday sport became so vitriolic that after publishing several letters on the issue Sidman bluntly refused to print anymore. *Camden News*, 5 August 1943.

from the RSSAILA on the published list of volunteers. This represented 8 per cent of the town's total population. Female volunteers made up 14 per cent of the town's women, while the 'diggers' from the RSSAILA represented 11 per cent of all men over fifty-five years of age.

From the detail published in the weekly roster, volunteers worked a total of 4,447 individual shifts, which came to a total of 22,235 voluntary hours. The Centre was fully staffed on all shifts, with the busiest nights being Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights, with a peak on Thursday night. There was an average of six volunteers on all shifts, but dropped off to four volunteers on Sundays. The Centre was busy in the first few months of 1944, when it was not unusual to have between eight to nine volunteers on a shift between Tuesday to Thursday nights. Activity reached a peak in early 1945 with the arrival of the RAF, and gradually tapered off over the months until it closed, with an average of four volunteers by March and April 1946. The final report of the Centre stated that it had operated for two years and two months⁸⁵.

An examination of the roster reveals a number of patterns amongst the volunteering. For instance, it was quite common for either mothers and their daughters, or for sisters to volunteer together. Amongst the women who volunteered 40 per cent were married and 60 per cent single, 22 per cent were sisters and 42 per cent were mother and daughters. There were a total of 117 separate families amongst all female volunteers, which represented over 17 per cent of all families in the area. Women tended to volunteer for either one day a week, or one day a month, perhaps with either the same group of friends, sisters together or mother and daughter together. Amongst these women the Woods sisters volunteered for eighty individual shifts, the Adams sisters seventy-six, the Roberts sisters 106, while Mrs A Poole and her daughter volunteered for 126 shifts, Mrs Williamson and her daughter 104, Mrs Gibson and her daughters 106 and Mrs Roberts and her daughters 146 shifts.

In some instances, the mother attended only a few shifts, probably to investigate the suitability of volunteering as an appropriate activity, and then the daughters continued on their own, reflecting a degree of independence associated with the

⁸⁵.

Camden Advertiser, 30 May 1946.

attitudes of modernity. This situation would also apply to women who were constrained by domestic duties, and their daughters undertook voluntary service on their behalf. For instance, Mrs Woods attended three shifts, while her daughters volunteered for eighty shifts. Some mothers and their daughters shared the volunteering, for instance, Mrs Poole volunteered for sixty-four shifts while her daughter undertook sixty-two. It appears from the roster that younger women were restricted in the number of shifts their mothers allowed them to undertake. As it is not possible to determine the age profiles of these volunteers, this is only speculation. For instance, Mrs Roberts had three daughters who volunteered for sixty-seven, twenty-eight and eleven shifts, with the youngest daughter undertaking the fewest shifts.

Individual women provided an extraordinary service commitment at the Centre. Elsie Gibson, (Arthur Gibson's wife) for example, volunteered for eighty-eight individual shifts, and Mary Sparkes, ninety, Kathleen Clifton, eighty-seven, and Mary Evans, eighty. All but one were members of the Hospitality Centre's management committee and the WVS.⁸⁶ From amongst the total number of female volunteers thirty-five women (19 per cent) volunteered for more than fifty individual shifts. This constituted 10,335 voluntary hours or 51 per cent of total voluntary hours for all female volunteers.

Amongst the volunteers on the roster 34 per cent of the women had some association with the WVS. Of the remainder, 47 per cent were associated with the Camden Red Cross, 32 per cent associated with the Camden Hospital Auxiliary and eighteen per cent with the Camden CWA. An examination of the data for cross-membership between these organisations reveals that 8 per cent of all these women were members of all four voluntary organisations, 21 per cent of at least three, 42 per cent of at least two and 62 per cent of at least one. Volunteering for the Centre was a predominantly Protestant activity. Amongst the female volunteers 48 per cent were Church of England, 10 per cent Methodist and 2 per cent Presbyterian, with only 14 per cent being Roman Catholic, which was below the proportion of Catholics in the local population at 24 per cent of the total community. To further re-enforce the interrelatedness of Camden's women's committees, the women from the Hospitality Centre management committee formed the RSSAILA Women's Auxiliary in May

⁸⁶.

Mary Sparks was only a member of the Camden Red Cross.

1945⁸⁷ and, after the war, were the basis of the Welcome Home Committee (which is discussed in Chapter Six). As well, three of the women on the RSSAILA Auxiliary Committee were members of the WVS. This reflects, again, the interrelatedness of the different organisations in a small rural community and the high level of intimacy it creates within the population through class, social networks or religious affiliation.

The members of the Camden RSSAILA also volunteered for duty at the Hospitality Centre from its inception, but did not appear on the published roster until October 1944.⁸⁸ In May 'a further squad of Diggers' supplemented the original group of RSSAILA volunteers.⁸⁹ By October there were nineteen men volunteering for duty at the Centre.⁹⁰ According to the published roster the RSSAILA provided one male volunteer for most shifts up February 1946, with a short gap in August 1945 and January 1946. The men regularly supplied two male volunteers on Wednesday nights on alternate weeks. In all they volunteered for 363 individual shifts, which amounted to a total of 1,815 voluntary hours, compared to a total of 20,420 voluntary hours by the women. Amongst the men who volunteered for the Centre the highest number of shifts done by an individual was Harold McKellar, a 'blow-in' (manager of the Commercial Bank), who did forty-five, while twelve men volunteered for between twenty and thirty shifts.

The members of the RSSAILA were attracted by the 'homely' environment and decided to adjourn their monthly meetings to the Centre,⁹¹ where the women dutifully gave them 'a nicely served supper'.⁹² The members of the RSSAILA reported that they were always appreciative of the 'kindness' shown to them by the 'ladies',⁹³ and despite the late finishes to their meetings,⁹⁴ 'always... found a great welcome and a good supper awaiting us'.⁹⁵ To make things more comfortable they provided a table for themselves,⁹⁶ and were always pleased to be 'hostessed by

87. The members of the committee were Mrs H.W. McKellar (patroness), Mrs L.F. de Saxe (president), Mrs Rupert F.A. Downes and Mrs F.E. Coates (vice-presidents), Mrs S. Salt (treasurer), Mrs C. Evans (secretary), Mr R.F.A. Downes and Mr K.B. Wilson (auditors). *Camden News*, 3 May 1945.

88. *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

89. *Camden News*, 25 May 1944.

90. *Camden News*, 26 October 1944.

91. *Camden News*, 29 June 1944.

92. *ibid.*

93. *Camden News*, 25 January 1945.

94. *ibid.*

95. *Camden News*, 25 January 1945.

96. *Camden News*, 25 May 1944.

Camden's famed war-working ladies'.⁹⁷ Here the women willingly acknowledged the role of patriarchy, their own domesticity, and attended to the men's needs.

The members of the RSSAILA agreed to look after 'the billiards and games section at the [C]entre'.⁹⁸ Harold McKellar claimed that it was 'good to be... among the cream of Australia's young manhood'.⁹⁹ The men gave 'old-soldier experience and advice to the young Servicemen there' and sought out problems affecting their 'after-war rehabilitation'.¹⁰⁰ The members of the RSSAILA were proud to be 'in the good company of boys serving in this war'.¹⁰¹ The 'ex-diggers' were basking in the reflected glory of their youth by mixing with the young airmen at the Centre.

There are no surviving records from the Hospitality Centre so a detailed analysis of its visitors is not possible. From information in the *Camden News* and *Camden Advertiser*, however, it is possible to ascertain that the Centre was well patronised, and in the first month 'voluntary lady helpers' had served '750 servicemen with refreshments free of charge', and 'these did not include the men who had not signed the register'.¹⁰² This was an average of 188 suppers per week. By November 1944 'the [C]entre averaged 434 teas and suppers weekly'¹⁰³ and at the time these were expected 'to greatly increase'.¹⁰⁴ By December 1945 there was an average nightly attendance fifty servicemen and women being provided with 150 free cups of tea. On a weekly basis this amounted to over 1000 cups of tea, 'together with foodstuffs'.¹⁰⁵ Over the life of the Centre total expenditure amounted to £954/5/7,¹⁰⁶ and the volunteers served 79,000 teas¹⁰⁷ which averaged out at around 700 suppers per week. At various times the number of servicemen at the Centre proved a drain on resources. For instance, in August 1945, the Centre committee appealed for coupons for tea, sugar and butter. It was having difficulty providing nightly refreshments to the increasing number of service personnel visiting the Centre, and the inadequate coupon ration did not help the situation.¹⁰⁸ Harold McKellar, the

97. *Camden News*, 21 September 1944.

98. *Camden Advertiser*, 9 March 1944.

99. *Camden Advertiser*, 30 March 1944; *Camden News*, 23 March 1944.

100. *Camden News*, 26 October 1944.

101. *Camden News*, 22 February 1945.

102. *Camden Advertiser*, 4 May 1944.

103. *Camden Advertiser*, 16 November 1944.

104. *ibid.*

105. *Camden News*, 20 December 1945.

106. *Camden Advertiser*, 30 May 1946.

107. *ibid.*

108. *Camden Advertiser*, 30 August 1945.

Centre's secretary, noted that donations to the Centre could be 'in cash and kind', particularly butter.¹⁰⁹

Two women provide examples of the general characteristics that have been described above. Frances McLeod and Patricia Fraser were two of the volunteers. Both were 'blow ins', they had married RAAF airmen, and like Stella Reading, had their own careers. They were representative of the effect of modernity on volunteering in Camden and how it affected gender expectations.

Frances McLeod was a service wife with a young child, living in Camden with her parents while her husband was on active duty overseas. As a member of local voluntary organisations her circumstances were well known by a large part of the local community.

McLeod married Lindley Shiels, twenty-five years of age, an aircraftsman in the RAAF, in 1941 at St Andrews Presbyterian Church, Camden.¹¹⁰ McLeod was one of a number of Camden women who had married either RAAF or RAF airmen. The McLeod family had lived in West Wyalong, where Frances worked in the Rural Bank. When the family shifted to Camden, she worked in the head office of the bank in Sydney, and lived with her parents at Camden Post Office.¹¹¹ On her husband's return from active service in April 1945 he saw his three-year-old daughter 'for the first time'.¹¹²

Shiels originally came from Comboyne in the Taree district and had originally enlisted in 1941 at Wyong, while a member of the Rural Bank staff. He had trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme in Canada, and then became attached to the Trans-Atlantic Ferry Command. Some time later he was on anti-submarine patrols from English bases, travelling as far as Iceland. His next job was to ferry an aircraft to the Middle East and then India. For the twelve months to April 1945 he had been a member of the personal aircrew of Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied

¹⁰⁹ *Camden Advertiser*, 16 November 1944.

¹¹⁰ At the wedding her bridesmaids were her sisters, Beatrice and Verle. Shiels' best men were his brother and fellow officer, Leading Aircraftsman, Len Sharman. *Camden News*, 3 July 1941.

¹¹¹ *Camden News*, 3 July 1941.

¹¹² *Camden Advertiser*, 26 April 1945; *Camden News*, 26 April 1945.

Commander in Southeast Asia. While on active service with the RAAF in the United Kingdom, he had been promoted to the rank of Flying Officer. By the time he returned to Camden in April 1945 he had been on active service for three years and nine months. He was eventually discharged in September 1945.¹¹³

In 1945 Frances McLeod was a member of the Hospitality Centre's committee and a member of the WVS, while her mother was a member of the Red Cross, the WVS and the CWA. McLeod volunteered for thirty separate shifts at the Centre between May 1944 and her husband's return in April 1945, sometimes volunteering for two shifts a week, particularly in October 1944. In total she volunteered for 150 hours of duty at the Centre. Her marriage, subsequent pregnancy and child rearing had restricted her involvement in voluntary organisations, but with her husband overseas, she obviously felt that the Centre was an appropriate organisation to support.

The Camden community, particularly the women of the WVS, would have been sensitive to the needs of McLeod and her young baby. Her husband was exactly the type of the servicemen that the soldier comforts of the Camden WVS were trying to assist. He was the ideal role model of one of 'our boys', which was one of the recurring themes within the patriotic activities of the WVS.

Patricia Fraser volunteered for duty at the Hospitality Centre from its opening in March 1944 until its closure in 1946. Fraser was from Sydney and had strong views on a woman's service role, which were influenced by her Non-conformist background.

Fraser undertook a total of twenty individual shifts at the Centre, which amounted to 100 hours of voluntary service. She recalled that her purpose in volunteering for duty at the Centre was 'to chat and help to be friendly to these lads far from "home"'.¹¹⁴ Fraser was driven by a strong Christian belief based on the conviction that 'what you can do for others is a blessing to yourself'. Her view was that she must 'ease ye one

^{113.} *Camden Advertiser*, 26 April 1945; *Camden News*, 26 April 1945; *World War Two Nominal Roll*, Lindley Lloyd Shiels.

^{114.} Letter, P.M.C to I.C.W., 15 September 1999.

another's burdens', combined with a strong 'desire to help people' that is 'God based'. She maintained that her

life would have been devoid of the joy and satisfaction I get when I know I have made someone laugh, eased a lonely heart... and my life would lack purpose.¹¹⁵

Fraser was an infants teacher at Camden Public School from 1942 to 1947, and stayed in Camden from Monday to Friday at the Plough and Harrow Hotel. At weekends she travelled home to stay with her parents at Wahroonga. Fraser was Scottish born and immigrated with her family to Australia in 1930. Her mother was a strict Presbyterian, highly educated and worked as a language teacher. Fraser was a tall, good looking young woman of strict religious views, who had a positive impact of those she taught and worked with while in Camden. She was a dedicated teacher who trained at Sydney Teachers College in 1941-2, where she met her first husband, Robert Hider, twenty-one, of Camden. Hider was a wireless operator with a RAAF Beaufighter squadron (30 Squadron). She married Hider in August 1944.¹¹⁶ Hider's Beaufighter flew over Camden on route from Mt Gambier:

The school was out in force, when, from the south this mighty twin-engined, two man aircraft zoomed low overhead, circled three times, dipping its wings. My heart nearly broke in two.

It all happened so quickly, and away it sped north, bearing that wonderful disciple of the Lord's, that only son of precious parents, and that beloved husband of but a brief period, away into the blue beyond - never to return.¹¹⁷

Hider was reported missing in action after a raid over Ambon in October 1944. Fraser wrote,

^{115.} Letter, P.M.C. to I.C.W., 26 March 2001.

^{116.} Patricia Fraser and her twin sister were born at home in Scotland on 19 May 1923. Her father was a 'gentleman farmer'. Her mother, a language teacher, was highly educated and held a MA(Hons) degree in languages from the Edinburgh University, played piano and sang. Her parents were Presbyterian, and her mother had a 'strong Christian faith, which she handed on to me'. The family migrated to Australia from Scotland in 1930 and settled in Toowoomba. The family moved to Sydney and she and her sister were Sunday School teachers at St John's Presbyterian Church at Wahroonga. Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, pp. 1, 2-3, 5, 21, 32-33. *World War Two Nominal Roll*, Robert Henry Hider.

^{117.} Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, p. 38. She reports that the thought of it still 'shatters me'. Letter, P.M.C. to I.C.W., 1 October 1999.

The feeling of sorrow and despair hung over me like a cloud, as my personal sky was deeply overcast. My heart and soul ached for Robert Henry... Often I felt like nothingness, like the noon heat on a desert plain - but I had to 'press on' in God's plan.¹¹⁸

After her husband was reported missing, she took a short period of leave from teaching and stayed with relatives in Toowoomba, after which she returned to Camden.¹¹⁹

While in Camden, Fraser found time to be the patron of the Junior Red Cross at Camden Public School and a volunteer for the Volunteer Air Observer Corps stationed at Macarthur Park in central Camden. She was good friends with Rita Tucker, who had similar views of service, and who encouraged Fraser to be involved with the CWA Younger Set, of which she became president. Tucker would have agreed with Fraser's favourite Biblical verse 'Micah 6, verse 8:

What He requires of us is to do what is just, so show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.¹²⁰

Ada Beveridge, the New South Wales president of the CWA, wrote 'she is one of our Younger Set members we should be immensely proud... her thoughts were so fine, and she was full of courage [after the death of her husband.]... What an inspiration she is!'¹²¹

Fraser always had a strong service commitment, and after her marriage to Lewis Colman in 1951 she continued to be involved in voluntary service associated with Uniting Church, CWA, and many other organisations, in Henty.¹²²

McLeod and Fraser were representative of the 'agency' of Camden's younger women, who had 'new ideas and careers'. The war had presented them with a set of circumstances, and a number of options, which they used to their best advantage.

¹¹⁸ Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, p. 40.

¹²⁰ Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, p. 89.

¹²¹ Ada Beveridge, 'I Met a Girl' *Countrywoman* (1948) quoted in Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, p. 50.

¹²² Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, pp. 102, 144, 147.

The war had taken their husbands from them and forced them both to be economically and socially independent. At the same time they chose to retain for themselves the Victorian ideals of service, family values and the associated domesticity that was practiced by Camden womanhood. Both women took part, in what Alexander and Torney-Parlicki described as the 'new world', and became role models in Camden for other 'rural women [who] had far less chance of enjoying modernity and gaining an exciting job',¹²³ particularly those from the working class and the more remote parts of the Camden district. McLeod and Fraser's voluntary service at the Centre was an example of active citizenship, and showed in Campbell's terms, that they exercised their 'freedom of association', and their 'right to choose... rather than sit back passively'.¹²⁴ Fraser and McLeod showed 'courage and leadership' by 'taking up new challenges' presented by the war.¹²⁵ Both women were 'blow ins', and Fraser a 'city type'. Voluntary duty at the Centre for them was an act of patriotism and illustrated how both women embraced Camden's rural ideology. Both women then used the security provided by Camden's rural ideology to exercise their 'agency' through volunteering.

RAF airmen and the Hospitality Centre.

Any examination of the Hospitality Centre, its operations and those who volunteered to serve at it, would not be complete without looking at the impact of the presence in Camden of RAF airmen who visited the Centre in 1945 and 1946.¹²⁶ Amongst all the military that moved through the Camden area during the war, the presence of the RAF, particularly at the Centre, was remembered by volunteers with the greatest affection. A detailed examination of their presence in the town is a useful exercise as it provides an additional insight into the complex nature of forces in Camden voluntarism, which affected WVS volunteers.

The presence of the RAF in Camden marked, psychologically at least, a new stage of the war for the Camden community, including the WVS. The RAF left an indelible imprint on the town's memory and touched its cultural soul. It rekindled the 'spark' of

¹²³ Alexander and Torney-Parlicki, *A Wealth of Women*, pp. 154-155.

¹²⁴ Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, p. 72.

¹²⁵ Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, p. 26.

¹²⁶ The first RAF squadron arrived at Camden aerodrome in January 1945, and their principal duties were undertaking transport work between Australia, New Guinea and the Dutch East Indies.

nationalism that was an integral part of Camden's Britishness, the WVS voluntary ethos, the service ideology of Camden's female philanthropy and Camden's rural ideology that had contributed to the success of earlier WVS activities, such as the British Mobile Canteen Fund Appeal (see Chapter Five). The RAF succeeded in lifting the spirits of the Camden community out of its war fatigue and made a direct connection with the community's cultural roots. According to Muriel Whiteman, the secretary of the Centre:

We were particularly pleased to have had the opportunity of offering Camden's warmest hospitality to these lads from the United Kingdom. We feel that our efforts have forged a bond of friendship between Camden and the Mother Country.

We seek no praise for our efforts. It was our duty and pleasure to express, in a practical way, our tribute to the service men of England and Australia for their gallant deeds, which saved our beloved British Empire from destruction and our Commonwealth from invasion by a cruel foe.¹²⁷

For the 'diggers' of the RSSAILA, the presence of the RAF kindled nostalgia, bringing 'back memories of the full-hearted hospitality extended by British people to Australian servicemen of this and the last war'.¹²⁸

Above all, the RAF was imbued with glamour and a romantic image. This imagery also contributed to the sexualisation of female volunteering in Camden. As with the VAs, a lot of local women found the RAAF, and RAF, 'caught their imagination'¹²⁹ and aroused a sense of excitement and adventure.¹³⁰ These men were seen as 'the right type', 'highly desirable' and very marriageable. Romantic attachments developed and resulted in a number of marriages (similar to McLeod and Fraser). It provided an opportunity for allowable flirting and, for a working class girl, volunteering at the Centre provided community sanctioned access to these men. Marrying an airmen was a way of becoming socially upwardly mobile. This was an opportunity not to be wasted or trifled with, and their mothers encouraged this form of interaction.

¹²⁷ *Camden Advertiser*, 30 May 1946.

¹²⁸ *Camden News*, 22 February 1945.

¹²⁹ Interview, B.R. and E.R., Camden, 5 May 1993. Hasluck, *The Government and The People* 1939-1941, p. 400.

¹³⁰ Baker, *Overseas War Brides*, pp. 92, 124.

For other Camden women the presence of the airmen at the Centre turned these men into surrogate brothers, fathers or husbands by extending the sense of family. This certainly contributed to the motivation of women like Fraser to volunteer for service at the Centre, as noted in her earlier comments. The companionship these women provided to the airmen contributed to the maintenance of military morale and success of the war. In this way voluntary service at the Centre was being patriotic.

Informal fraternisation between the RAF and local women was also encouraged by the Centre management on a number of levels. For example, from June 1945, Mary Huthnance, Jessie Seymore and 'seven other ladies' from the Hospitality Centre taught dancing to RAF airmen every Wednesday night at the CWA rest rooms.¹³¹ Harold McKellar, the Centre secretary, maintained that the women 'taught... the RAF boys... how to put an arm around our Camden girls'.¹³² Single women regularly attended dances at the aerodrome organised by the airmen as mentioned earlier. For example, Patricia Fraser reported that the RAF invited her to dances at the aerodrome. She observes that she

was all agog, as I joined a bus load of females heading out to partner the English airmen. My escort, Dan, met me with cheerful pleasantries, and we whizzed off to some dance routine.¹³³

An RAF airman reported:

We entertained with dances on a Saturday night, sending transport into Camden and the surrounding areas to pick up the girls, and of course a local band, returning them to their homes after the dance.¹³⁴

The RAF organised an orchestra, which played at dances organised by the 'Camden Girls' committee, mentioned earlier. All nine committee members volunteered for duty at the Hospitality Centre, and three of the nine women had female relatives who were members of the WVS.¹³⁵ In February 1945, Lady Josephine Anderson, the

¹³¹. Camden CWA, Minutes, 19 June 1945.

¹³². *Camden News*, 20 December 1945.

¹³³. Colman, *Just a Simple Soul*, p. 41.

¹³⁴. Letter, P.D. (243 Squadron, RAF, 1945) to I.C.W., 18 June 1999.

¹³⁵. The organisers were Gladys Clissold, Valda Clissold, Peggy Hayter, Pat Hider, Pat Hynes, Joan Roberts, Mary Sparks, Phyllis Watson, Violet Wheeler. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 September 1945, 27 September 1945, 18 October 1945, 22 November 1945.

head of the hospitality committee of the British Centre in Sydney, requested Camden residents to 'offer hospitality' to the British airmen'.¹³⁶ As a result, many RAF airmen received invitations into Camden homes, including one from 'Mrs Onslow' who invited the officers for singalongs, afternoon tea and picnics.¹³⁷ In 1945, two local music teachers, Bertha and Michael Brien,¹³⁸ helped form an all male RAF choir from amongst a number of airmen who regularly attended church at St John's Church of England, where Bertha Brien played the organ.¹³⁹ The choir began with eight members, grew to twenty-two men by late 1945 and met twice weekly in the Brien's home for singing practice. The choir was quite successful and appeared at the Welsh Society in January 1945, broadcast on radio for 2CH¹⁴⁰ and the ABC,¹⁴¹ performed at a fundraiser for the Hospitality Centre at the Paramount Theatre in Camden¹⁴² and sang at the Camden Presbyterian Church.¹⁴³ Bertha's niece particularly remembers that they were 'a fine choir' and,

I remember [CT], because he had the most beautiful untrained tenor voice I have ever heard, and at that stage of my life (a teenager) I had a 'thing' about tenors!¹⁴⁴

At the Methodist Church around ten to twelve RAF airmen regularly attended the Sunday evening services. After church there would be a cup of tea, community singing and a light form of entertainment.¹⁴⁵ In September 1945 eight RAF airmen conducted Sunday evening services at the Church.¹⁴⁶ Church members invited the

¹³⁶ *Camden Advertiser*, 22 February 1945; *Camden News*, 15 February 1945.

¹³⁷ Interview, A.T., (RAF, 1945) Campbelltown, 9 July 1993; Letter, D.V.R. (243 Squadron, RAF, 1945) to I.C.W., 29 June 1999.

¹³⁸ Michael Brien was a baritone and his wife Bertha was a music teacher, who lived in View St, Camden. *Camden News*, 28 June 1945; *Camden Advertiser*, 6 September 1945.

¹³⁹ Bertha Brien's niece stated that her aunt played the organ at St John's Church of England and St John's provided a 'supper and cheerio' for the 'men of the Forces after Evensong' on a Sunday night. *Camden News*, 9 August 1945. 'Many of the lads started going to church, and as a result, my Aunt made their home in View St, open house after church on Sunday evenings. Many of these boys had beautiful voices, mostly untrained. Michael took many of them in hand, and trained them, which resulted in a very fine choir. Letter, R.A. to I.C.W., 26 June 1988.

¹⁴⁰ In June 1945, twenty members of the choir journeyed into Sydney to sing at the annual Welsh Society to an audience of 500. In September 1945 twenty members of the choir made a broadcast on Radio 2CH as guests on the Goodland's 'Stars of the Services'. The broadcast was transmitted to Britain, and each chorister received a souvenir record from AWA. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 September 1945.

¹⁴¹ The choir successfully auditioned for the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and was engaged to sing over the radio network in January 1946. *Camden News*, 29 November 1945.

¹⁴² In February, the choir participated in the 'Hot & Tot Concert Party' at the Paramount Theatre in Camden, with all proceeds going to the Hospitality Centre. *Camden News*, 21 February 1946.

¹⁴³ The choir also sang a number of items at an evening service of the Camden Presbyterian Church, which was conducted by E.C. Barlow, RAF. *Camden News*, 13 September 1945.

¹⁴⁴ Letter, R.A. to I.C.W., 26 June 1988.

¹⁴⁵ Interview, F.S., Camden, 15 January 1987.

¹⁴⁶ The airmen led the service, played the organ, gave the prayer, the Bible reading, the address and

airmen into their homes for meals as they considered that this type of hospitality was 'good for them'.¹⁴⁷

The male interpretation of the service ideology found expression through sport and fixtures which were arranged by the Camden RSSAILA. For instance, in July 1945 the Association organised exhibition matches of rugby union and soccer between the Royal Navy and RAF at Camden Showground.¹⁴⁸ The Camden District Cricket Association (The president was Stan Kelloway and the secretary, Arthur Gibson) extended an invitation to both the RAF and RAAF to put teams in the 1945-46 summer competition. The Association officials had female relatives who volunteered for duty at the Hospitality Centre and were members of the WVS.¹⁴⁹ In December 1945 the volunteers at the Hospitality Centre were 'proud' to entertain 'members of the King George VI cricket team' with afternoon tea.¹⁵⁰

A contributing factor to the welcome the RAF received in Camden was the convivial relations that had developed between the RAAF and the Camden community. The RAAF had been present at Camden aerodrome since 1940, when the RAAF Central Flying School was established. The local community had always been more predisposed to airmen than the soldiers of the AIF, and the RAF capitalised on this factor. Amongst military personnel in the local area Camden was regarded as a RAAF leave location (see Chapter Two).¹⁵¹ Soldiers from Narellan military camp were discouraged from taking leave in Camden by both civic and military authorities.¹⁵² This contrasted with the airmen who, according to Muriel Whiteman,

one fellow sang a solo. The congregation was invited to 'adjourn to the School Room for the social hour' which followed the service. Those involved included: LAC Keith Ward led the service; LAC R. Gould played the organ; AC Donald Eastaugh led the prayer; the first Bible reading was read by LAC B Goodyear and the second by LAC R Rogers; AC1 W. Causer sang a solo 'Into Thy Hands' by Newman Wolsey; and LAC Eric Barlow delivered the address. Camden Methodist Church, Order of Service, 23 September 1945. *Camden News*, 13 September 1945, 20 September 1945. Interview, F.S., Camden, 15 January 1987.

The results were: the Rugby Union, RAF 13 defeated RN 8; and soccer, RAF 5 defeated RN 2. *Camden News*, 19 July 1945.

Camden News, 9 August 1945.

Camden News, 20 December 1945.

Soldiers from Narellan military camp usually took leave in Sydney or Campbelltown, particularly as the Camden tram which passed the camp took them to Campbelltown station. Letter, R.M. (2/AIF, Narellan military camp, 1941), to I.C.W., 3 July 1999.

Letter, C.R. (2/AIF, Narellan military camp, 1941) to I.C.W., 5 August 1999. As well in January 1945 three soldiers appeared in court, and were fined for being drunk and disorderly 'in the town of an evening'. *Camden News*, 11 January 1945, 21 January 1945. This type of behaviour was not isolated to Camden. *Camden News*, 25 January 1945. Needless to say a 30 strong military piquet from Narellan military camp went on nightly duty in Campbelltown early in the war. They wore full battle dress, steel helmets and side arms. They visited all hotels in Campbelltown and the

represented a 'pleasing feature of the [C]entre's operations' and exhibited 'gentlemanly behaviour... at all times.'¹⁵³ The airmen had other advantages over the AIF in that they were better educated, had a higher social status and were older than their army equivalent at the Narellan military camp. In Camden, social status was very important, and the airmen had a clear advantage over the soldiers from Narellan in this respect. As well the relatively small numbers of airmen meant that the town was not overwhelmed, either psychologically or in a physical sense, compared to the thousands of soldiers who passed through the Narellan camp. The RAF used all these features to their advantage during their stay.

The RAF personnel were always appreciative of the local efforts. Flight Lieutenant RL Sillett, RAAF Welfare Officer, stated that the 'British boys came a long way from home and... appreciate[d] the hand of friendship extended to them'.¹⁵⁴ In a letter received by Harold McKellar from Squadron Leader DA Lloyd, RAF, 'at sea', stated in part, that he was,

Bound for home on the 'Orion... Having been in a position to see the splendid work put in by the Camden people entertaining the RAF. I would like to express, through you, the appreciation of some 200 RAF lads now en route for the United Kingdom. I am certain that the RAF stationed at Camden, past and present, would feel that my words were inadequate to express their gratitude. I feel like the poet who wrote: 'and I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me'... To you hospitable Camden folk, I would, on behalf of the RAF, say: 'Thank you'... In the space of seven months I grew to love Australia and Australians I came into contact with, and these came from all walks of life. Probably that sums up the Australian hospitality...¹⁵⁵

Members of the RAF that were stationed at Camden during this period have stated in correspondence to the author that despite Camden being 'sleepy compared to London', the local community were 'very, very hospitable', 'friendly', 'nice' and

Campbelltown railway station. RM notes that 'Camden was spared this indignity'. Letter, R.M. (2/AIF, Narellan Military Camp, 1941) to I.C.W., 20 July 1999. In 1945 Camden police felt that the town 'should be out-of-bounds' for soldiers from the Camp. As a result the commanding officer of the Camp, Captain Mortlock, agreed to supply piquets 'to patrol the town' and stated that 'if further complaints [were] received the town [would] be declared 'out of bounds'. *Camden News*, 15 February 1945.

¹⁵³ *Camden Advertiser*, 30 May 1946.

¹⁵⁴ *Camden Advertiser*, 15 March 1945.

¹⁵⁵ *Camden Advertiser*, 18 April 1946.

'wonderful', which created many 'fond memories of the area' for them.¹⁵⁶ Camden's response to the RAF was not unique, however: as one RAF airman reported 'I went to many such places in many parts of the world, always with gratitude for the volunteers who always gave us such a welcome'.¹⁵⁷

Shortly after the RAF left Camden aerodrome the Hospitality Centre closed. It was six months after the winding up of the Camden WVS. The last day of operation was Tuesday, 14 May 1946. At its closure the Centre was 'believed to be the only one still operating in New South Wales'.¹⁵⁸ Flight Lieutenant Sillett, RAF, described the Camden effort 'as a job worthy of anything of its nature performed in the British Empire'. The secretary of the Centre, Muriel Whiteman maintained that servicemen from local bases 'found our Centre a haven of rest [and] greatly appreciated their visits to the Centre'.¹⁵⁹ Those present at the final meeting included Wing Commander McLean, RAF, and from the Sydney YMCA, EJ Rogers, the area field officer, and HT King, assistant commissioner, who spoke of the 'splendid work of the local committee'. Mrs Evans reported that the final credit balance of £15/2/5 would be donated to the Camden Repatriation Committee.¹⁶⁰ On the final disposal of equipment, the billiards table and seating were sold to the Camden RSSAILA, and the RSSAILA used the former Centre as a temporary clubroom.¹⁶¹ Eventually, the 'Camden Diggers' found a permanent home after they purchased the Church of England National Emergency Fund amenities hall from Narellan military camp.¹⁶²

Conclusion

¹⁵⁶ Interview, A. T., (RAF, 1945) Campbelltown, 9 July 1993; Letter, R.P. (300 Wing, RAF, 1945) to I.C.W., 14 February 2000; Letter, D.V.R. (243 Squadron, RAF, 1945) to I.C.W., 29 June 1999; Letter, S.M. (243 Squadron, RAF, 1945) to I.C.W., 29 July 1999; Letter, E.G. (238 Squadron, RAF, 1945) to I.C.W., 23 June 1999; Letter, P.D. (243 Squadron, RAF 1945) to I.C.W., 10 June 1999.

¹⁵⁷ Letter, R.P., (RAF, 300 Wing, 1945) to I.C.W., 14 February 2000.

¹⁵⁸ *Camden Advertiser*, 18 April 1946.

¹⁵⁹ *Camden Advertiser*, 30 May 1946.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Camden Advertiser*, 18 April 1946.

¹⁶² 'In the snug comfort of the room and furnishings taken over from the late Hospitality Centre as our temporary club room... Another stride forward was the decision then to purchase the commodious Church of England Amenities Hall of Narellan Camp - and which will seat 900-1000 - for removal to our Camden site, where rooms, etc, will be added straight away to give adequate club room amenities to last until our Memorial Hall building is erected, and which may be five to eight years off...'. *Camden News*, 20 June 1946. The hall stood on the corner of Oxley and Mitchell Streets until 1980, when it was demolished to make way for the Camden Civic Centre, which was opened on 17 April 1982.

The Hospitality Centre represented a new era in Camden's wartime voluntarism. The Centre reflected identifiable changes in the conduct and operation of Camden's female philanthropy and volunteering. This was caused by a combination of factors, but principally the death of Sibella Macarthur Onslow. Other contributing factors included the role of 'outsiders' and 'blow ins', the influence of modernity, the presence of the RAF and the absence of the elite at the Centre.

Macarthur Onslow's death left the elite leaderless, which in turn caused a crisis of confidence amongst them. Their grief, combined with Macarthur Onslow's absence, created a leadership vacuum and paralysed their response to the social and moral crisis caused by the invasion of the town by Sunday 'beer hunters' in January 1944. A sophisticated solution to the invasion, and the problems that it presented the town, were organised by 'outsiders' who had witnessed the ramifications of such a situation elsewhere in New South Wales. These welfare authorities knew that the situation threatened the harmonious relations that had been enjoyed between the town's civilian population and the local military since 1940.

The absence of the elite at the Centre gave 'outsiders' and 'blow ins' a free hand to exercise control of the facility. This was the only time this occurred during the war in Camden. And apart from the Centre's foundation, 'outsiders' and 'blow ins' were largely responsible for the success of the Centre, through their management of, and their visitations to the Centre, especially the RAF/RAAF. The representatives from the Sydney YMCA who managed the Centre were not constrained by Camden's conservatism or its rural ideology. From their wartime experience elsewhere in Australia, these 'outsiders' understood the formula that was needed to attract servicemen away from Camden's hotels: young women.

Leaving aside Macarthur Onslow's death, it would still have been unlikely that the elite would have been associated with the Centre because of its links with the public use and misuse of alcohol, and the immoral behaviour that triggered the events which led to its foundation. The Centre was also outside the usual area of interest for Camden's female elite, which was principally focused on voluntary organisations of British origins. Even the history of the 'service ideals' within Camden's female philanthropy and the influence of the WVS voluntary service ethos, was not sufficient to overcome the lack of interest of the elite. This lack of interest even

persisted when the RAF appeared and heightened Camden's British nationalism and connections to 'home'. But, the Centre did present new opportunities for Camden's lower middle and working class women to explore their independence through volunteering.

The Centre was the first time in Camden's wartime volunteering that female sexuality was openly used in conducting a patriotic activity. It represented a perceptible shift by Camden's female philanthropy away from Victorianism, which had constantly been re-enforced under the influence of Macarthur Onslow. The Centre represented a paradox in the interpretation of femininity within Camden's female volunteering. The Centre's management projected an image of the 'old fashioned girl next door' to encourage servicemen to use the Centre. The image looked backwards to Victorian femininity and the 'ideals of service' that were an integral part of Camden's rural ideology and conservatism. On the other hand Camden's 'young women perceived the situation differently. They embraced the opportunity provided by the Centre, and from the security provided by Camden's rural ideology, used modernity to explore their own independence and desires through voluntary service.

Combined with the influence of 'modernity', the Centre produced a situation where Camden's young women were allowed to freely mingle with young single men, 'of the right type', unchaperoned, because they were prepared to volunteer as patriotic 'hostesses'. The community sanctioned this type of interaction, and even encouraged it. Under these circumstances female volunteering was a mix of patriotism, domesticity and modernity, combined with conservatism, rural ideology and patriarchy.

Despite the Centre not being organised by the WVS, individual volunteers at the Centre, like McLeod and Fraser, showed the same sense of self-sacrifice and dedication to duty typical of the WVS in Camden. For many women from the WVS their voluntary service at the Centre represented their last major activity of the war. Under these circumstances the WVS voluntary service ethos encompassed the changes that the Centre brought to voluntarism in Camden, and showed again, its flexibility and robust nature. The Hospitality Centre succeeded where the Soldiers'

Recreation Room had failed and was a fitting closure to the war for the women of the WVS and their commitment to wartime service.

CHAPTER TEN

'OUR DUTY'

THE SALVAGE COLLECTION CAMPAIGN OF BEN YOUNG AND IRENE HUTHNANCE

The thesis so far has argued that the service ideology within female philanthropy was not only restricted to the activities of the WVS but added to, and reflected, the service ethos of other voluntary organisations in Camden. Its influence also extended beyond female volunteering and affected some of the men's patriotic activities, crossing over gender boundaries while still subject to the principle elements that governed Camden voluntarism – class, conservatism, parochialism and patriarchy. The Camden salvage collection offers a microcosm of these issues through two case studies. Two central figures ran the campaign, Ben Young, a local teacher and a 'blow in', and Irene Huthnance, a member of the WVS. Huthnance's efforts succeeded, whereas Young's did not.

The aim of salvage collection was to gather waste material from various sources for re-use in the war effort. The civilian salvage effort was part of the general homefront war effort where salvage was collected for 'patriotic and charitable purposes'.¹ It was aimed at recycling various materials including paper, rubber, metal and rags. To fully understand the events surrounding Camden's civilian salvage effort, it is necessary to examine the administrative arrangements put in place by the New South Wales and Commonwealth Governments.

Civilian Wartime Administrative Arrangements for Salvage.

Civilian salvage collections in the early stages of the war within New South Wales were not new, and had been organised on behalf of hospitals, the Salvation Army,

1. *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates (2nd Series), Session 1941-42, vol. 166 [NSWPD]*, R.J. Heffron, 21 October 1941, p. 1931.

the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Red Cross, and other religious and charitable bodies.²

The Sydney press had kept up a campaign to support salvage collection and published a number of articles between April and July 1940.³ A Commonwealth-State Conference was held, where it was decided that each State would implement waste collection schemes, particularly with regard to waste paper, waste rags and non-ferrous metals.⁴ Under the administrative arrangement worked out between the Commonwealth and States 'each state was left to its own devices in working out a scheme.'⁵

In June 1940, the New South Wales Mair Government considered the appointment of a Conservator of Waste to centralise the collection of waste for 'hospitals, patriotic and charitable organisations'. This waste was to be sold and profits distributed on a pro rata basis to these organisations. The Mair scheme intended maintaining the existing system of handling waste paper by selling directly to Australian Paper Manufacturers. It was also to be 'supplemented by the voluntary co-operation of local government bodies, school children, war work movements and workers desiring to assist Australia's war effort'.⁶

In July 1940, Reginald Weaver was appointed as New South Wales controller of salvage,⁷ and he wanted local controllers in each local government area, registration of volunteers and the use of voluntary organisations to collect salvage. Profits were to be distributed on a pro rata basis to organisations in existing salvage schemes.⁸ Weaver's aim was for all funds from salvage to go to a central co-ordinating body which then distributed the money to national organisations, like the Red Cross and

² NSWPD, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, p. 1931. NSWPD, vol. 165A, R.W.D. Weaver, 31 July 1941, p. 185.

³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 April 1940, 6 April 1940, 16 April 1940, 29 April 1940, 22 May 1940, 18 June 1940, 29 June 1940, 1 July 1940, and other issues.

⁴ NSWPD, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, 29 October 1941, p. 2232. NSWPD, vol. 166, W.E. Dickson, 11 November 1941, p. 2448.

⁵ For instance, in Victoria a State Controller was appointed under the *National Security Act* (Vic) and in Queensland a scheme was organised on local government lines under the *Second Hand Dealers Act* (Qld). NSWPD, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, 28 October 1941, p. 2232.

⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 June 1940

⁷ His full title was controller of salvage for national purposes and he held the position between 1940-41. Helen Bourke, 'Reginald Walter Darcy Weaver', in John Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 12, pp. 425-6.

⁸ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1940.

the Australian Comforts Fund.⁹ For this he needed the co-operation of local councils,¹⁰ which he wanted to establish local depots.¹¹ In this respect, the New South Wales Government had copied Great Britain and delegated salvage administration to local councils.¹² Weaver's attempt to centralise fundraising created suspicions and resistance amongst local organisations, and some councils¹³ and country patriotic funds refused to co-operate with his scheme.¹⁴

In June 1941 the newly elected McKell Government ordered an inquiry into salvage administration by the New South Wales Public Service Board. As a result the *National Emergency (Salvage of Waste) Act 1941* (NSW) was enacted in November 1941.¹⁵ The purpose of the Act was to 'put on a proper basis the collection, control and disposal of salvage which is saved by the public for patriotic purposes'.¹⁶

Robert Heffron, the Minister for National Emergency Services, claimed that the previous system had been 'open to abuse'.¹⁷ The Act put salvage under the control of the Minister and the new controller of salvage became the head of the Department of National Emergency Services.¹⁸ It also gave councils the sole authority to collect waste 'for patriotic purposes'¹⁹ and distribute the proceeds among the local organisations.²⁰

⁹ *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.W.D. Weaver, 29 October 1941, p. 2242.

¹⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1940.

¹¹ *Camden News*, 22 August 1940, 5 September 1940.

¹² Additional responsibilities given to local councils in New South Wales by the Commonwealth and State Governments included National Emergency Services, War Damage Insurance, Evacuation, Civilian Aid Services, collection of salvage, emergency supplies of essential goods, public works for the Defence Authorities. McKell, 'The State and the War Effort', p. 1298.

¹³ In August 1940, the Mayors of Petersham, Willoughby and Waverley had refused to co-operate with Weaver's scheme. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 August 1940, 30 August 1940, 2 September 1940, 3 September 1940.

¹⁴ The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted in an editorial in May 1940 that country patriotic funds were less than enthusiastic about forwarding money to Sydney. It also noted that an audit of fundraising in the country had totalled £20,000 but only £4,000 had been forwarded to central executive of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund in Sydney. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1940.

¹⁵ AANSW, NESCF, 41/66M/1762, clipping from *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 August 1941.

¹⁶ *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, p. 1931.

¹⁷ *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, p. 1931.

¹⁸ This was Mr Treble. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 July 1941.

¹⁹ The Act defined 'patriotic purposes' in s. 2(1) as any purpose in the war which was for the 'relief of distress occasioned by the war' in New South Wales or British Dominions, 'the supply or provision of comforts, conveniences, amenities or special equipment to members of His Majesty's naval, military or air forces', and 'the relief, assistance, or support of members of the said forces...'.
National Emergency (Salvage of Waste) Act 1941 (NSW).

²⁰ *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, p. 2236.

In the same month that the McKell Government was ordering an inquiry into salvage in New South Wales, the Menzies Government thought that there should be Federal co-ordination of the States' salvage organisations. The Minister for Supply and Development appointed a co-ordinator of salvage,²¹ whose duties were to maintain contact with State salvage organisations and other collection bodies, and ensure that salvage material went into areas associated with the war effort.²²

As part of the total war effort, in July 1943 the Curtin Government established the Commonwealth Salvage Commission under the *National Security (Salvage) Regulations*. The *Regulations* were broad and sweeping, and gave the Commonwealth Government control over all salvage efforts throughout the country.²³ The Commission came under the jurisdiction of the Minister of State for Home Security, Hubert Lazzarini, who was appointed the chairman.²⁴ Lazzarini was also the member for Werriwa, which included the Camden area.²⁵

The Commission organised drives for materials in short supply, co-ordinated and directed control of voluntary organisations involved in salvage,²⁶ ensured that salvaged material was re-utilised to best advantage,²⁷ and took over the jurisdiction of the state controllers who were exclusively involved in civil salvage.²⁸ The Commission aimed to increase Australia's salvage recovery rate from 25 per cent to that comparable with the United States of America, Canada and Great Britain at around 70 per cent.²⁹

²¹ The minister was Senator McLeay and appointed A.M. Walker as controller.

²² *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 1941.

²³ National Security (Salvage) Regulations, No 179, (1943).

²⁴ The Commission was established on 13 November 1942. NAA, IDCS, CA 478, War Cabinet Minute No 2482, Agendum No.45/1942.

²⁵ Lazzarini was first been elected to the House of Representatives for Werriwa in 1919 and defeated in the 1931 election. Binar, *Parliamentary Handbook 1938-1945*, p. 27. He was re-elected in 1937, 1940 and 1943. *Camden News* 4 November 1937, *Camden Advertiser*, 26 September 1940, 26 August 1943.

²⁶ Department of Information, *Facts and Figures*, 6, September 1944, p. 36.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1943.

²⁸ NAA, CSC, CA266.

²⁹ NAA, A3670/1, 451/1942, cited in Dawn Peel, 'Salvaging community pride', p. 8.

Lazzarini launched a national salvage campaign in a radio broadcast in September 1943 where he maintained that it was 'every citizen's duty to co-operate loyally',³⁰ and develop 'a salvage consciousness'.³¹ In November 1943 a National Salvage Corps was created to 'carry out salvage activities throughout Australia',³² and from December 1943, the sale or purchase of waste paper without a licence was prohibited.³³ The order required the registration of all groups collecting waste as units of the National Salvage Corps and laid down rules for their conduct and establishment. As well badges were to be issued to committee members and volunteers, licences were to be prominently displayed, rules for the conduct of meetings were to be drawn up and submitted to the commission, as were minutes of such meetings and audited accounts. Suggestions were given for the collection, cartage, sorting and storage of materials, as well as a list of licensed purchasers.³⁴ By September 1944 the Salvage Commission had taken control of waste paper, rags, wool grease and scrap rubber.³⁵

Salvage collection in Camden would be guided by these legal requirements, but also responded to local factors. If any of these administrative arrangements did not agree with local perceptions of how the salvage collections should be conducted, or where the funds should be distributed, then the collections stopped or the legal requirements were simply interpreted to suit local conditions.

Ben Young and the Camden and District Scrap Iron Salvage Organisation.

Young's salvage scheme started after the British defeat at Dunkirk in June 1940, like most of Camden's male voluntary effort. As noted earlier in the thesis, Dunkirk and the general progress of the European war was the public awakening of Camden's male voluntary effort.

^{30.} *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 September 1943.

^{31.} *Camden News*, 14 October 1943.

^{32.} *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 1943.

^{33.} The new licences defined waste paper as discarded paper, cardboard or strawboard.

^{34.} Peel, 'Salvaging community pride', p. 8.

^{35.} Department of Information, *Facts and Figures*, 6, September 1944, p. 36.

Young was a teacher at Werombi Public School. He was well respected, a good organiser and a strong supporter of the local community and its patriotic activities, including the WVS. He had undertaken taken civil defence training organised in Camden by the WVS in January 1940 (discussed in Chapter Five).³⁶ Young's service commitment was strongly influenced by his Non-conformist religious background, and his altruism showed the link between volunteering and patriotism.³⁷

Young was enthusiastic about his project and naively envisaged that his scheme could cover Camden Municipality and the adjacent local government areas of Wollondilly and Nepean Shires. He anticipated collecting scrap iron from local farms and 'other local sources', transporting it to Camden railway station by council lorries and selling it to Australian Iron & Steel at Port Kembla.³⁸ Young stated in the *Camden News* that he had correspondence from Essington Lewis, Director-General of Munitions, and Cecil H Hosking, General-Manager of Australian Iron & Steel Ltd at Port Kembla, who approved of his proposal. Young maintained that his scheme was meant to be a 'practical effort to assist' the national war effort.³⁹

By early August 1940, Young had recruited a number of voluntary collectors for his scheme from throughout the district, including Irene Huthnance in Camden.⁴⁰ Huthnance was the only woman to volunteer her services. John Haddin, the manager of *Camden Park*, offered his services and gave Young considerable support, while at the same time, in his role as manager of *Camden Park*, would act a representative of Sibella Macarthur Onslow and her considerable interests in the area. Young called his scheme the Camden and District Scrap Iron Salvage Organisation.⁴¹ From the outset his scheme had a local focus. Each collector nominated the patriotic fund that they wanted to benefit from the sale of scrap iron in their locality - a version of geographic patriotism. In the end this would contribute to the downfall of his salvage collections.

³⁶. *Camden News*, 4 January 1940.

³⁷. He was a Methodist.

³⁸. Camden Municipal Council and Wollondilly Shire Council both agreed to provide transport to Camden railway station for the scrap. *Camden News*, 18 July 1940, 22 August 1940, 5 September 1940.

³⁹. *Camden News*, 11 July 1940.

⁴⁰. They were Irene Huthnance and R. Crowley in Camden, John S Haddin (farm manager of *Camden Park*) and William F. McMiles (teacher) at Mt Hunter), Mr T.P. Taylor at Theresa Park, William F. Moore (butcher) at The Oaks, Joseph Clowes (dairy farmer) at Orangeville, John Hurkett (labourer) at Oakdale and Ben Young at Werombi. *Camden News*, 1 August 1940.

⁴¹. *Camden News*, 16 January 1941.

Although, no male members of either Camden's gentry or upper-middle class actively participated in Young's scheme, he received extensive coverage in George Sidman's *Camden News*. Sidman maintained that Young received 'whole-hearted' support from the local community, and stated that Young hoped to reach a target of 100 tons of scrap iron during August. The *News* asked:

Can more be obtained? Who knows what can be done by an enthusiastic public? The people of the Camden district will be fully behind Mr Young in this effort. Every extra ton will help to swell their local patriotic funds still more.⁴²

In August 1940, Haddin claimed that he had between '30-40 tons of scrap metal' from *Camden Park* to 'assist local war effort funds'. Haddin, 'in conjunction' with Young, circularised all suppliers to the Menangle Creamery (which was part of *Camden Park*) asking them to donate scrap metal. The dairy farmers, who supplied to the Creamery, were asked to 'enumerate the items of scrap and the approximate weight' and save petrol by dropping them off on routine trips to either the Camden Vale Milk Company processing plant or Menangle. Alfred Ray of Camden offered the use of his lorry to pick up any scrap that could not be dropped off. Young hopefully predicted that in the following two months 200 tons of 'seemingly worthless scrap' would realise £400 'by economical handling', and each district centre would 'allocate its own funds' as it considered best.⁴³

Concerns were raised about the destination of the August collection in the *Camden News*.⁴⁴ At the time there was opposition to the export of scrap metal to Japan,⁴⁵ and questions were asked in the New South Wales Parliament.⁴⁶ Young maintained in the *Camden News* that he had been assured by the 'authorities', that all scrap collected would 'be used for Empire purposes', sold to 'firms engaged by the Commonwealth Government in the manufacture of armaments and munitions', with

⁴² *Camden News*, 8 August 1940.

⁴³ *Camden Advertiser*, 8 August 1940. The Camden Vale Milk Company, which was founded by the Macarthur family, built a milk processing plant in Camden in 1920. It was later became a co-operative and in 1929 merged with the Dairy Farmer's Cooperative. Todd, *Milk for the Metropolis*, pp. 87-97.

⁴⁴ *Camden News*, 10 October 1940.

⁴⁵ *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.W.D. Weaver, 29 October 1941, p. 2239.

⁴⁶ *NSWPD*, vol. 161, M. O'Sullivan, 9 October 1940, pp. 200-201.

the proceeds going 'to local patriotic organisations'. Young also stated that he had been assured that scrap would be 'exclusively used in Australia's war effort, and [would] not be exported to either Japan or any other foreign country'.⁴⁷

The *Camden News* provided a detailed list of suitable items for the August collection. They included farm machinery, old parts, axles, chains, bolts, nuts, axe-heads and 'iron of any kind and any quantity'.⁴⁸ Within Camden a number of carriers, and Camden Municipal Council, volunteered to transport metal to the Camden railway yards, where it would be loaded on railway trucks and sent to Port Kembla.⁴⁹ Contributions of scrap iron were patchy, but eventually ten tons of scrap was collected. The majority of scrap came from Orangeville with smaller amounts from Werombi and Camden,⁵⁰ and realised £23/1/11.⁵¹ A second consignment of eleven tons came from *Camden Park* and Camden in September,⁵² but other areas contributed nothing. The limited support that Young did obtain came from areas where the donors personally knew him. Both Orangeville and Werombi were close to his school, and, in and around Camden he had the support of *Camden Park* management.

In October 1940, the *Camden News* reported that the Camden WVS received a donation of £26/09/5, from the total sales of scrap iron in the area which had realised £45/8/3.⁵³ Of this amount Irene Huthnance had raised £15/16/6, £8/12/11 worth of scrap was collected from Orangeville, and £2 was collected by Young in Werombi. Apart from the WVS donation, the remainder of the funds went to Camden District Hospital.⁵⁴

As noted earlier, Young wanted the co-operation of the three councils that covered the local district, but he was to be disappointed. His dealings with the councils were influenced by parochialism, locality and national patriotism, which were important, if sometimes conflicting, factors in determining community reaction to wartime

⁴⁷. *Camden News*, 1 August 1940.

⁴⁸. *Camden News*, 22 August 1940. CMC, Minutes, 15 August 1940.

⁴⁹. T. Taylor (Theresa Park), G. Tickner (Werombi) and J.H. Noakes used their motor transport to convey the scrap to Camden. *Camden News*, 24 October 1940.

⁵⁰. *Camden News*, 5 September 1940.

⁵¹. *Camden Advertiser*, 19 September 1940.

⁵². *Camden News*, 12 September 1940.

⁵³. *Camden News*, 24 October 1940.

⁵⁴. *Camden News*, 21 November 1940.

activities. For instance, Nepean Shire Council refused to co-operate with Young due to an existing salvage scheme in the shire.⁵⁵ His dealings with Wollondilly Shire Council were only marginally better. In July 1940 the Council had agreed to cart donated scrap iron from local farmers to Camden railway station, but no mention was made on how the funds raised would be disbursed. At the same meeting the Council had decided to establish a salvage depot at The Oaks (the headquarters of the Council) and give all funds raised to the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. From the outset the Council's intention was to assist the 'national war effort' through the Lord Mayor's Fund, and not assist local patriotic interests. One councillor even questioned the value of the scheme. Apparently, the cost to the Shire of collecting and moving the scrap was greater than the money raised from its sale.⁵⁶ Similarly Quirindi Municipal Council reported to the Quirindi Red Cross that salvage 'was not a money making enterprise'.⁵⁷

In November 1940 Young organised two rail trucks of scrap iron to be sent from Camden Railway Station to Port Kembla. The whole consignment of twenty-four tons eight cwt came from *Camden Park*, was collected by Wollondilly Shire Council and required several lorry loads. The management of *Camden Park* agreed with Young that the proceeds of the sale would be divided between Menangle and Camden patriotic causes,⁵⁸ which meant the Camden WVS, the Great Britain War Victims' Relief Fund, the Camden Red Cross Society and the Menangle Patriotic organisation.⁵⁹ All were organisations associated with Sibella Macarthur Onslow. The planned distribution of funds ran counter to the July decision by the Wollondilly Shire Council, but was within the original aims of Young's scheme. It is conjecture, but perhaps the Council may have been less willing to assist with transport if it had been informed of the intended beneficiaries of the sale of the scrap. Macarthur Onslow had little involvement with, or influence over, the communities to the west of Camden, which made up most of Wollondilly Shire.

^{55.} The Council saw no need to co-operate with Young and his volunteers when 'residents, in one riding at least [were], collecting scrap iron, and a carter [took] it to Sydney free of cost'. *Camden News*, 10 October 1940.

^{56.} *Camden News*, 16 January 1941; By this stage of the war the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund (ACF) was funding the entire 'war work' of the YMCA and the Salvation Army within New South Wales. Badham Jackson, *A State at War*, p. 14.

^{57.} Quirindi Municipal Council reported that salvage only paid 30/- per ton, and that to raise £54/19/5 it would cost the Council £123/15/6 to gather and ship it. Durrant, *Quirindi*, p. 29.

^{58.} *Camden News*, 28 November 1940, 16 January 1941.

^{59.} *Camden News*, 30 January 1941.

After the November consignment had been sent to Australian Iron and Steel at Port Kembla, the general manager wrote to Young seeking clarification as to who should receive payment for the consignment. This letter may have been prompted by Young's failure to register his organisation under either the *Charitable Collections Act 1934* (NSW), or the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund, which meant in effect that it was illegal. Or it may have been prompted by some knowledge of the Wollondilly Shire Council's decision made in July.

Young claimed that the consignment should be credited to him on behalf of the Camden and District Scrap Iron Salvage Organisation. On the other hand, Wollondilly Shire Council wanted the payment made out to Weaver, the state controller of salvage.⁶⁰ Young maintained his position in further correspondence to Australian Iron and Steel, but it replied that the matter had been referred to Weaver for clarification. In the meantime Wollondilly Shire Council had received a letter from Weaver. He wanted to know who should receive the funds, Young, or the national effort in Sydney under his control. The Council decided, completely consistent with its existing policy, that the proceeds of all scrap collected should be credited to Weaver's scheme.

The difference of views between Wollondilly Shire Council and Young over the receipt of the salvage funds, was really a conflict between local interests. As discussed earlier in the thesis, this difference was a natural part of Camden's rural ideology. There was a parochial rivalry between the interests of the Shire, which primarily lay in the smaller villages to the west of Camden, and those of the Macarthur family at *Camden Park* and the interests they supported in Menangle (the village was surrounded by *Camden Park*) and Camden. The response of the Wollondilly Shire Council was exacerbated by the amalgamation of Wollondilly Shire with Picton Municipality in 1940, at which time the Shire Council's headquarters were moved from The Oaks to Picton.⁶¹ The scrap had originated at *Camden Park*, all the beneficiaries of the sale of scrap were associated with Sibella Macarthur Onslow and Young was perceived to be aligned with these interests.

⁶⁰ *Camden News*, 16 January 1941.

⁶¹ Wollondilly Shire, which made up most of the western part of the Camden district, was amalgamated with Picton Municipal Council on 1 May 1940. Both councils were dissolved, and the State Government appointed a provisional council, which administered the new Shire from The Oaks, until elections were held in December 1940. *Camden News*, 2 May 1940. The Council decided in May 1940 to move its headquarters from The Oaks to Picton - a decision which took effect in December 1940. *Camden News*, 2 May 1940.

Given the parochial rivalry that existed between the Picton community and the interests of the Macarthurs in the Camden area, the now Picton based Shire Council was unlikely to support Young's scheme.

The controversy surrounding the salvage payment developed into a public spat between Weaver and Young that was played out on the front the pages of the *Camden News*. George Sidman, the owner of the *News*, was a long time supporter of the interests of the Macarthurs and this support was extended to Young. The *News* published the first of a series of three letters from Weaver to Young in late January 1941. Weaver stated that his aim had been to centralise the marketing and distribution of salvage from his office, and argued that any separate selling groups, like that organised by Young, would 'adversely affect our organisation'. He maintained that:

We are endeavouring largely to follow the principles adopted in connection with the National Campaign in Britain where salvage activity has been made the compulsory duty of local governing bodies. Here, however, we have adopted voluntary methods and we appeal to all citizens to assist the local governing authorities co-operating with us....⁶²

Finally, Weaver wanted to know if Young would support the New South Wales salvage campaign.⁶³ In essence, while Weaver thought that Young's sentiments were wholly worthy, Weaver did not agree with the local focus of Young's scheme. Weaver obviously felt that local schemes like Young's only complicated broader problems that the state based salvage collection had run into in Sydney.⁶⁴

Young restated his intention that the funds raised from his scheme were to be distributed to Camden and Menangle patriotic interests, in the *Camden News*.⁶⁵ Weaver replied:

The position is somewhat complicated by the circumstances explained in your letter but I would be very seriously embarrassed by the necessity of

⁶². *Camden News*, 30 January 1941.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴. In Sydney there had been the theft of scrap metal and bogus private collectors using the names of charities. *NSWPD*, vol.166, R.W.D. Weaver and R.J. Heffron, 29 October 1941, pp. 2241, 2235.

⁶⁵ *Camden News*, 30 January 1941.

making any specific redistribution of the proceeds of the scrap iron collections along the lines which have been suggested...⁶⁶

Weaver maintained that Young's request 'would precipitate similar requests from elsewhere' and would jeopardise the 'national campaign'.⁶⁷ Weaver made it clear that the distribution of monies from his fund to the Red Cross and the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund avoided the difficulty of 'local distribution... and our soldiers as a whole benefit equitably'.⁶⁸ Weaver finished his letter by stating that he looked forward to Young's continued support and hoped that in

all the circumstances, that the good people in your locality will appreciate these difficulties and be content with the simple methods of distribution adopted by my organisation as this is the only practical solution.⁶⁹

Young publicly thanked those individuals who assisted his salvage scheme in the *Camden News*, and in protest, resigned.⁷⁰

Arthur Gibson rushed to Young's defence with the headline 'Mr Weaver's Decision Proves Unpopular'. It maintained that Weaver's decision had 'dampened local enthusiasm in the collection of salvage', and that the local control of funds raised from the sale of scrap provided 'a great incentive to the voluntary workers and resulted in much scrap-metal being gathered'. The *Advertiser* continued:

Whether Mr Weaver's argument is right or wrong matters little. The fact is that the scrap-metal flow from the Camden district to the steel works has ceased. It appears that if the State Controller of Salvage wants the local metal he will have to employ someone to organise the collection and we doubt if that would prove an economic proposition.

This newspaper claims that Mr Weaver should concede the point, as he has now neither the support of the local voluntary patriotic workers nor the scrap-metal.⁷¹

^{66.} *Camden News*, 30 January 1941.

^{67.} *ibid.*

^{68.} Interestingly, in October 1941 in State Parliament, Weaver accused the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of 'selfishness' and being 'prepared to drop us or anybody else if it could add more to its pound of flesh'. *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.W.D. Weaver, 29 October 1941, p. 2242.

^{69.} *Camden News*, 30 January 1941.

^{70.} *ibid.*

^{71.} *Camden Advertiser*, 30 January 1941.

Gibson's description of the situation was completely correct.

Sibella Macarthur Onslow wrote to the *Camden News* to defend Young, and indirectly her own position. Young had been effectively acting on her behalf, and the interests of *Camden Park*, as all the scrap at the centre of the controversy had come from *Camden Park*. She stated in a letter to the *Camden News*:

Sir - In reading your papers before sending them overseas, I have specifically noted the articles and correspondence about scrap iron, and though it is good to see that the Shire is linked with the State scheme for salvage, to me it is most regrettable that in the linking, the very valuable services of Mr Young have been lost. This is a loss our country cannot afford, for, in these difficult and dangerous days, the co-operation of all worthy citizens is needed, and Mr Young, who, before Mr Weaver's scheme was heard of, showed both initiative and energy in salvaging scrap iron, deserves our admiration and gratitude.

Can nothing be done to recover his sympathy, interest and services in this great work?⁷²

This was the only occasion during the war that Macarthur Onslow wrote a letter to the *Camden News*. Macarthur Onslow, Gibson and Sidman had turned Young into a 'local patriot' and a representative of their interests, and Weaver was portrayed as the interfering 'outsider'. In this instance parochialism was also tied to the wealth and power of the Macarthurs, and Weaver was indirectly challenging the social authority of Sibella Macarthur Onslow.

Perhaps Macarthur Onslow's letter touched a raw nerve within the State Government, because Weaver wrote to Young requesting him to reconsider his resignation. Yet, Weaver's letter to Young contained some stinging comments. Weaver thought Young's resignation an act of petulance. He accused Young of 'selfish parochialism', and not acknowledging the wider 'national' aims of the salvage collection. While Weaver recognised that 'nothing' could be done without local co-operation, he felt 'that public opinion in your locality may not be alive to the wider aspects of the salvage problem'. Weaver was 'greatly disappointed' that Young

⁷² *Camden News*, 13 February 1941.

should resign with his 'experience and knowledge of local affairs' and he found it 'necessary to relinquish the valuable work that...[he had]...so capably organised'.⁷³ But Weaver's support for centralisation, over local control of salvage collection, fell on deaf ears in Camden.

The controversy was important enough to be discussed by the New South Wales executive of the WVS in March 1941. The executive received a letter from Weaver which outlined the 'salvage controversy in Camden' and gave 'an account of the interviews which had taken place'. The WVS executive was not impressed. It discussed how many 'WVS Centres and other bodies acquire funds for their work through local salvage committees' and noted disdainfully that 'Mr Weaver of course wanted the collection to be strictly centralised'. The executive did not make any specific recommendation to the Camden WVS.⁷⁴ Presumably the state executive felt the Camden WVS, under the influence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, had the situation under control and decided not to interfere.

At the March meeting of Wollondilly Shire Council, a letter from Young was read. Its contents remain unknown but the Council passed a motion of appreciation for Young's effort, and regretted that he had withdrawn his support from the salvage scheme. The same meeting also tabled a letter from Weaver, which encouraged the Council to organise the collection of scrap iron in Burragorang Valley.⁷⁵ It was ignored. The Shire Council may not have liked the influence of the Macarthurs and *Camden Park*, but as a natural part of rural ideology, the Council also resented being told what to do by an 'outsider', particularly a 'city type'.

In an interview with the *Camden News*, Young stated that

any action on [my] part in the past was not to be the cause of disagreement. The national crisis is far too grave for any lack of unity in the country or among the people themselves.

⁷³ *Camden News*, 20 February 1941.

⁷⁴ Marie Farquharson, the New South Wales WVS President, noted that many WVS centres and 'other bodies' received funds from local salvage work. The executive noted that Weaver was not happy with this situation and wanted all collection and salvage fundraising to the centralised. ML, WVS, MSS 408, 1(3), EM, 14 March 1941.

⁷⁵ *Camden News*, 13 March 1941; *Camden Advertiser*, 20 March 1941.

Young accepted the advice of his doctor to 'avoid active work and unnecessary worry'. He maintained his withdrawal from the salvage scheme was due to eye trouble,⁷⁶ and not any ill feeling towards Weaver. In May 1941 the *Camden News* reported that the district had lost 'the services of one of its loyal war workers'.⁷⁷ Young had been admitted to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, facing compulsorily retirement from the New South Wales teaching service due to ill health.

The Young salvage scheme was part of the dynamics associated with local parochialism, Camden's rural ideology and wartime fundraising associated with the WVS. The voluntary service ethos of the WVS had encouraged Young to do 'his bit' for the war effort, become a local patriot and in the process strengthened the community's sense of identity. His activities had confirmed the city/country animosity that existed in Camden as part of its rural ideology. The local community was proud of its independence and resourcefulness, and the resented interfering 'outsiders', especially those from Sydney. The local press clearly reflected this in its support for Young and its attitude towards Weaver. In the end Young underestimated the effort needed to organise a project on the scale that he originally envisaged, and hopelessly exaggerated the amount of scrap iron that he could collect in the district. He had also been drawn into a dispute that he had unwittingly created for himself involving the parochial interests of Sibella Macarthur Onslow, Weaver and Wollondilly Shire Council. All these forces were much larger than Young's salvage scheme, and his naive enthusiasm to assist a patriotic cause had blinded his pragmatism.

The closure of the Young scheme, and the lack of interest by the men in Camden for salvage collection, created a vacuum which allowed Irene Huthnance to step in. She took control of the local salvage effort from early 1941 and continued in that role until the end of the war.

Irene Huthnance

^{76.} *Camden News*, 20 February 1941.

^{77.} *Camden News*, 29 May 1941.

After the collapse of the Young scheme, Irene Huthnance became the principal civilian organiser of salvage in the Camden area. She was the epitome of the WVS volunteer in Camden, illustrating the relationship between wartime volunteering and patriotism.

Huthnance lived in central Camden and looked after her husband, who was the manager of the Camden dairy factory. She was a Protestant member of Camden's middle class, politically conservative and an active member of St John's Church of England.⁷⁸

Huthnance had a strong commitment to community service, which was supported by her 'determined', 'strong minded' personality. She was reported to be a 'little prepossessing' and a 'motherly sort of woman', who liked organising other people in a well meaning fashion, although at times she could 'put a lot of people off-side' by being a bit of a 'gossip' and 'busy body'. Her name became synonymous with the Camden salvage effort, and consequently she was always 'thought of well from that point of view', especially in the minds of local people after the war.⁷⁹

Huthnance undertook her community service as a member of, and tireless worker for, many local voluntary organisations including the Camden WVS, Camden Red Cross, Camden CWA, Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary, Camden United Australia Party, and St John's Church of England Mothers' Union.⁸⁰ Apart from salvage, she organised a variety of wartime fundraising activities including carnivals, stalls and dances, and held positions in a number of organisations.⁸¹ She

⁷⁸. Interview, D.L., Camden, 12 August 1999; Interview, R.E.N., Camden, 11 August 1999; Interview, B.F., Camden, 28 July 1999.

⁷⁹. *ibid.*

⁸⁰. Interview, R.E.N., Camden, 22 August 1998.

⁸¹. For example, she organised stalls at WVS Allies Day on 31 July 1942, and 1945 WVS Carnival. *Camden Advertiser*, 6 August 1942; *Camden News*, 9 August 1945. She was a member WVS Sewing party each week from 1942-1945 to Narellan Military Camp. *Camden News*, 20 December 1945. She was vice-president of the Camden District Hospital Women's Auxiliary 1938-1941. *Camden News*, 14 July 1938, 10 July 1941. She ran a 'Mile of Pennies' in 1938 as a fundraising activity for Children's Ward for Camden District Hospital. CHS, Women's Hospital Auxiliary, Camden, Golden Jubilee, Proceedings, 1983; *Camden Advertiser*, 17 November 1938. She organised dances for Camden District Hospital 1943-44. *Camden News*, 27 July 1944. She assisted on stalls at St John's Spring Flower Show in October 1938. *Camden News*, 20 October 1938. She was a member of St John's Church of England Mothers' Union and organiser of St John's Church of England 1940 Floral and Rainbow Ball. *Camden News*, 3 October 1940. She organised the 1941

always had the best interest of the community at heart and was a 'hard worker', who 'really personified the volunteer'. Her self-sacrifice, sense of purpose and dedication to duty were acknowledged in interviews with local people.⁸²

As noted earlier, Huthnance was the only female member of the Camden WVS who made any attempt to either organise or assist with the town's civilian salvage effort. Huthnance was representative of a pattern that had been established by Crookston and Tucker. Through her salvage work Huthnance entered Camden's public male space, developed a 'public persona', yet at no time did she challenge Camden's patriarchy, or status quo. As a result she gained a considerable amount of kudos for doing so. She was able to cross class boundaries in the township, and the dividing line between Camden's public and private space. In doing so she successfully developed a 'parallel power structure' for herself within Camden's female philanthropy, from where she acquired and exercised her own social authority, separate from the influence of Macarthur Onslow. Through her dedication she gained the support of Camden's male decision makers on the Council, was given a public position within the town's hierarchy as controller of salvage, and was therefore able to organise the collection of salvage on her own terms.

The WVS, assisted by Irene Huthnance, organised Camden's first wartime civilian salvage effort in February 1940. It was influenced by the salvage efforts of the British WVS⁸³ and collected clean newspapers through local schools. The Camden WVS subsequently received parcels of newspapers from schools at Werombi, Camden, Oakdale, The Oaks, Cobbitty, Theresa Park and Mt Hunter,⁸⁴ which raised £2/7/7.⁸⁵ The WVS also tried to encourage Camden Municipal Council to organise the collection of waste materials, such as paper and metal.⁸⁶

Ball with fundraising split between Camden District Hospital Auxiliary (£11/15/3) and WVS (£23/10/6). *Camden News*, 2 October 1941. She was the organiser of the 1944 St John's Parish Debutante Ball. *Camden Advertiser*, 13 June 1944. She was vice-president of the Camden United Australia Party Branch and warden of the Camden Manchester Unity Lodge. *Camden News*, 27 February 1941, 18 December 1941.

^{82.} Interviews, D.L., Camden, 12 August 1999, R.E.N., Camden, 11 August 1999; B.F., Camden, 28 July 1999.

^{83.} Graham, *The Story of WVS*, pp. 11-12.

^{84.} *Camden News*, 15 February 1940, 22 February 1940, 21 April 1940, 25 July 1940.

^{85.} *Camden News*, 25 July 1940.

^{86.} *Camden News*, 18 July 1940.

Huthnance's first waste paper collection which benefited the WVS occurred in September 1940⁸⁷ and established a number of precedents which she was able to repeat in later salvage collections. The salvage she organised was transported free of charge to the Camden railway yard by Camden Municipal Council.⁸⁸ The waste paper was purchased by Australian Paper Manufacturers at Botany, which also supplied the bags for packing waste paper free of charge and paid the freight. She organised two local receiving depots, one at the rear of the *Camden News* office,⁸⁹ and the other at her house in Barsden Street.⁹⁰ The use of her house in this instance demonstrated the strong personal commitment she had to her salvage efforts. Huthnance received help in packing and dispatching consignments of waste paper from a number of people. For instance, in September she was assisted by Ben Young⁹¹, and in January 1941 by Harold Driscoll and 'one school boy' when she sent away 105 bags of waste paper.⁹² In May 1941 she was helped by 'a number of youths'⁹³ when she consigned 157 bags of waste paper from Camden weighing one ton nine cwt, and again in June 1941, when she consigned two tons thirteen cwt of paper.⁹⁴ Huthnance personally knew most of the donors to her salvage campaign and this considerably helped her collections. She took advantage of the intimacy that was an integral part of Camden's rural ideology.

Huthnance received a considerable amount of publicity in the *Camden News* and *Camden Advertiser*. Both newspapers reported up coming salvage collections, the aims of the collections, suitable salvageable items, those who helped her, the results of individual collections both in quantity and the amount of money raised from the sale of the salvage, and gave cumulative tallies of the funds raised. For instance, the *Camden News* reported that the September 1940 collection was 'for patriotic purposes'⁹⁵ while in April 1941 the funds raised were for 'local patriotic and charitable objects'.⁹⁶ In September 1940 the profits of £2/14/8 from the collection⁹⁷ were split between the WVS and Camden District Hospital.⁹⁸ In April 1941 the

⁸⁷ *Camden Advertiser*, 19 September 1940.

⁸⁸ CMC, Minutes, 23 September 1940.

⁸⁹ *Camden News*, 17 October 1940.

⁹⁰ *Camden Advertiser*, 19 September 1940.

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *Camden Advertiser*, 30 January 1941, 13 February 1941. *Camden News*, 13 February 1941.

⁹³ They included David Kerrigan, Don Auld, Jack Butler, Dick Blattman, Jesse Hayter and Enid Clifton. *Camden News*, 1 May 1941.

⁹⁴ Ken Gibson, Dick Blattman, Basil Huthnance, and Bruce Betts. *Camden News*, 12 June 1941.

⁹⁵ *Camden News*, 17 October 1940.

⁹⁶ *Camden News*, 17 April 1941.

⁹⁷ *Camden News*, 17 October 1940.

⁹⁸ *Camden Advertiser*, 19 September 1940.

Camden News reported that Huthnance's latest consignment of waste paper realised £5/4/0 and outlined the details of receipts of £59/18/6 for the previous six months, which had been distributed as follows:

Camden Women's Voluntary Services	£39/1/0
Camden Red Cross	£10/0/0
Camden District Hospital	£10/17/1
	£59/18/6 ⁹⁹

At the same time the *Camden News* maintained that only 5 per cent of waste was being collected and encouraged greater co-operation 'to help in th[e] war effort'. Suitable products for recycling included 'waste paper, brown paper, newspaper, old books, magazines, catalogues, telephone books, price lists, scrap cardboard, cardboard boxes, cigarette packets' but not 'greaseproof, carbon paper and cellophane'.¹⁰⁰ By July 1941, with the co-operation of Camden Municipal Council, the *Camden News* reported that she had successfully raised £57/16/0 from paper, £26/16/6 from scrap iron and £2/4/5 from rags,¹⁰¹ while in August she raised £85/14/4 from the collection of waste paper.¹⁰²

The *Camden News* aided Huthnance's salvage effort by giving advice on recycling and the conservation of waste paper. The *News* published an article by Ernest Sommerlad under the headline 'Waste Makes Work, How We Get Our Cardboard, Australia's Hardwoods Replace Baltic Pulp'.¹⁰³ Sommerlad maintained that not only would 'local charities benefit' from donations of waste paper, but also people would help keep 'an industry of great significance in this country... along its difficult road'.¹⁰⁴ In March 1942 the *Camden News* informed the community that one ton of waste paper could be converted into 1,500 shell containers, 9,000 shell fuse

⁹⁹ *Camden News*, 3 April 1941.

¹⁰⁰ *Camden News*, 17 April 1941.

¹⁰¹ *Camden News*, 31 July 1941.

¹⁰² *Camden News*, 21 August 1941.

¹⁰³ E.C. Sommerlad was a Methodist newspaper proprietor from Tenterfield and a Country Party member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. He wrote a series of 17 articles under the general heading of 'Our Industries', which were published in the *Camden News*. *Camden News*, 18 April 1940 to 8 August 1940; Rod Kirkpatrick, 'Ernest Christian Sommerlad,' in Ritchie, *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 12*, p. 16. George Sidman and Sommerlad knew each other from their membership of the New South Wales Country Press Association. They were both past presidents. *1947 Annual Report New South Wales Country Press Association*, pp. 9, 74.

¹⁰⁴ *Camden News*, 11 July 1940.

components, 11,000 mine assemblies, 71,000 dust covers for aero-engines, 36,000 cut-out targets and 3,000 boxes of aero-cannon shells.¹⁰⁵

In May 1941 Huthnance placed a series of advertisements in the *Camden Advertiser* to increase her collections of waste paper. She adopted the slogan:

Don't Waste Waste Paper,
Save It For Australia's War Effort...And
Help Our Local District Boys!!¹⁰⁶

which was inspired by the Weaver campaign, which used the slogan 'Don't waste waste'.¹⁰⁷ The space for the advertisement was donated by the *Camden Advertiser's* War-Time Plan (which has been discussed in Chapter Eight).

The progress of the war directly affected the amount of waste paper collected by Huthnance. During 1940 she sent two consignments of waste paper, but by 1941 this had increased to seven. In 1942 she sent another seven consignments of paper, which were the largest consignments of the war. The February consignment weighed three tons five cwt,¹⁰⁸ June, three tons eleven cwt two qrts,¹⁰⁹ September, over three tons,¹¹⁰ and in late December two tons fourteen cwt.¹¹¹ By 1943 the number of consignments had dropped to one, in 1944 just two,¹¹² and one in 1945.¹¹³ The Camden press did not publish the weight of these latter consignments, suggesting that they were less than successful, or that it was no longer deemed important, or a combination of both.

The progress of the war also affected Huthnance's service work for the WVS. By 1945 she had become the largest individual fundraiser for the WVS. In 1942 she raised a total of £76/17/9 for the WVS, which the WVS considered was 'a

^{105.} *Camden News*, 12 March 1942.

^{106.} *Camden Advertiser*, 15 May 1941.

^{107.} *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, p. 2234.

^{108.} *Camden News*, 5 February 1942, 12 February 1942.

^{109.} The first July consignment realised £14/10/0. *Camden News*, 2 July 1942, 16 July 1942.

^{110.} This consignment realised £12/3/11. *Camden News*, 15 October 1942.

^{111.} *Camden News*, 24 December 1942.

^{112.} The 1944 consignments were in July and November. *Camden News*, 13 July 1944, 2 November 1944.

^{113.} *Camden Advertiser*, 8 March 1945.

tremendous amount of work' considering that she was involved in 'all other WVS activities'.¹¹⁴ The total for 1942 contrasts with £23/17/6 in 1941, £45/8/9 in 1943, £32 in 1944 and £29/10/0 in 1945. When the WVS was wound up in 1945, Huthnance had raised £224/2/4 from the sale of scrap paper and £37/1/1 by the sale of scrap-iron, which amounted to 7 per cent of the total income of the WVS for the entire war.¹¹⁵ Zoe Crookston felt that the WVS owed their 'grateful thanks for her untiring work'.¹¹⁶

The salvage effort was part of the broader civilian homefront war effort, and the WVS were not the only recipients of Huthnances's voluntary service. The Camden District Hospital also benefited from her work.¹¹⁷ In February 1941 she saved, and then sold a large quantity of clean newspaper, which raised £5/17/7.¹¹⁸ In May 1941, she raised a further £8/1/- from the sale of newspaper to local businesses and during January 1942, a further £3/8/3, which made a total of £28/9/3. She also collected rags and sent her first consignment in May 1941¹¹⁹ and by July she had raised £2/4/5.¹²⁰ And in July 1942 she forwarded another nine cwt of old rags, which realised £4/10/0.¹²¹

Huthnance organised two consignments of waste rubber, the first in July 1942.¹²² The Commonwealth Government made an appeal for rubber, due to the shortage of imported rubber¹²³ caused by the Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia. This appeal was launched on radio¹²⁴ and asked local councils to organise local collections.¹²⁵ Camden Municipal Council offered 'all assistance', and appointed Irene Huthnance as controller and organiser.¹²⁶ According to John Beasley, the Commonwealth

^{114.} *Camden News*, 16 July 1942.

^{115.} *Camden News*, 20 December 1945.

^{116.} *Camden News*, 10 August 1944.

^{117.} This researcher has assumed that all funds raised for Camden District Hospital by Irene Huthnance came from the sale of clean newspapers to Camden businesses. This was her stated intention in advertisements placed in the *Camden Advertiser*. *Camden Advertiser*, 15 May 1941.

^{118.} *Camden Advertiser*, 30 January 1941, 13 February 1941; *Camden News*, 13 February 1941. This is despite claims by the State Government that clean newspapers in the Sydney metropolitan area was worth between £13-£14 a ton. *NSWPD*, vol. 166, R.J. Heffron, p. 2235.

^{119.} In this activity she was helped by six young people to whom she expressed her thanks and they were David Kerrigan, Don Auld, Jack Butler, Dick Blattman, Jesse Hayter and Enid Clifton.

Camden News, 1 May 1941.

^{120.} *Camden News*, 21 August 1941.

^{121.} *Camden News*, 2 July 1942.

^{122.} The rubber collection was organised on 25 July 1942. *Camden News*, 16 July 1942.

^{123.} *Camden News*, 9 July 1942.

^{124.} For a report of Mr Beasley's radio broadcast, see *Camden News*, 9 July 1942.

^{125.} *Camden News*, 23 July 1942.

^{126.} *Camden News*, 16 July 1942; CMC, Minutes, 13 July 1942.

Minister for Supply, the boy scouts would carry out a house-to-house drive throughout the Commonwealth to collect scrap. He maintained suitable scrap included 'tyres, tubes, hot-water bags, bath caps, rubber hose, belting, bath mats, valves, washers, rings, and surgical tubes and gloves.'¹²⁷ Despite the assurances of John Beasley, there is no evidence to suggest that the Camden scout troop assisted with these particular collections in Camden.

Huthnance organised the establishment of a rubber depot at Cleary Bros in Argyle St, and early responses, according to Huthnance, were 'most encouraging'.¹²⁸ A large number of old motor tyres had been collected and the military authorities sent two trucks to collect 280 tyres weighing one ton thirteen cwt. Unfortunately forty tyres were left behind, but the *Camden News* cheerfully maintained that this was the start of the next consignment. However, in his report to Council the town clerk, Ken B Wilson, stated that he 'regretted having to inform Council' that 'some person had stolen a number of the tyres' from Cleary's Bros yard. He reported that a 'motor lorry had been driven into the yard, backed alongside the heap and the person concerned had picked out twenty of the best, loaded them on to his vehicle and drove off'.¹²⁹ Despite this problem, the local community seemed pleased with their effort, and in early October, Huthnance organised a further consignment of 120 tyres.¹³⁰

Huthnance organised a second collection of scrap rubber on behalf of Camden Municipal Council in early November, 1944. The *Sydney Morning Herald* announced a new drive to collect scrap rubber and maintained that Australians were guilty of hoarding rubber and that there was ample 'evidence that previous campaigns for the collection of scrap materials have be no means exhausted civilian stocks of unwanted rubber'.¹³¹ The Council ran an advertisement in the *Camden Advertiser*, which maintained the collection of rubber would be carried out, yet again, by members of the Camden boy scouts. Huthnance stated that rubber would be picked up from garages and 'country donors' were to 'leave old tyres and tubes at the Council's depot'.¹³² Local newspapers did not carry any reports of a consignment

^{127.} *Camden News*, 9 July 1942.

^{128.} *Camden Advertiser*, 30 July 1942.

^{129.} *Camden News*, 27 August 1942.

^{130.} *Camden News*, 1 October 1942.

^{131.} *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1944.

^{132.} *Camden Advertiser*, 9 November 1944.

leaving the district or the scouts assisting the collection, but the Council's annual report in November 1944 indicated that it had been a success.¹³³

Not all salvage appeals referred to Huthnance, however, met with the same success. The only appeal for aluminium in Camden was organised by Huthnance in January 1942. The Curtin Government requested local councils to organise an aluminium collection similar to that conducted in Great Britain in 1940, which had been a great success.¹³⁴ Camden Municipal Council decided 'to handle the request on the same lines as waste paper - through Mrs Huthnance'.¹³⁵ The Council ran advertisements for the appeal in the *Camden Advertiser*, and a reception centre for 'old pots, pans and other domestic aluminium ware' was established at Mrs Huthnance's house in Barsden Street. The advertisement stated that aluminium was needed by the 'Military Authorities for essential defence purposes' and 'BOY VOLUNTEERS [were] required to conduct a house-to-house collection of old aluminium'.¹³⁶ The appeal seems not to have enthused anyone because there is no evidence that Huthnance either used Camden boy scouts or sent off any aluminium.

Huthnance's waste paper collection in Camden ran concurrently with the Young scheme. In February 1941, at the height of publicity concerning the exchange of views between Young and Weaver, the *Camden Advertiser* published an article under the headline 'Stay Out, Mr Weaver'. It stated:

We do hope that Mr Weaver, Controller of Salvage, does not "butt-in" on this work, otherwise the services of a splendid voluntary worker will be lost and the waste paper campaign will cease. Mrs Huthnance is very definite on this point. The proceeds of her labours must go to local patriotic and charitable efforts.¹³⁷

This was a public expression of private comments made by Huthnance. She carried on her collection work in the complete confidence that she had strong support from

^{133.} *Camden News*, 30 November 1944.

^{134.} In England, in July 1940, Lord Beaverbrook, Minister for Aircraft Production, promised during the Battle of Britain to turn people's pots and pans into aircraft and appealed to the British population to hand over their aluminium to the WVS. The British population responded instantly. Calder, *The People's War*, p. 172.

^{135.} *Camden News*, 15 January 1942, 22 January 1942; CMC, Minutes, 12 January 1942.

^{136.} *Camden Advertiser*, 15 January 1942.

^{137.} *Camden Advertiser*, 13 February 1941.

the *Camden News*, the *Camden Advertiser*, Camden Municipal Council, Camden WVS and Camden Hospital. These organisations gave her a considerable degree of social authority within the town. Added to this, she did not get involved in the public spat between Weaver and Young.

In April 1941, Huthnance confirmed her position as Camden's unofficial collector of salvage when the *Camden News* stated:

The untiring efforts of Mrs JB Huthnance in collecting, packing and despatching waste paper to be turned into cash for local patriotic objects, has met with astonishing success. So much so that the organiser is now greatly encouraged to continue her efforts, and appeals to all to save as much waste as possible, especially rags and paper.¹³⁸

This was a public acknowledgment of the social authority that Huthnance had derived from her salvage efforts to this point of the war within the township.

By May 1941 Camden Municipal Council had also given de-facto recognition to Huthnance as the local organiser of salvage. At the time, Weaver wanted 'to arouse public interest' in salvage collection by increased publicity and establishing local salvage depots. The Council was not impressed by these overtures because it felt that Irene Huthnance had achieved 'excellent results' for local salvage collections.¹³⁹

In early June 1941, after the collapse of the Young scheme, the Council received further correspondence from Weaver's office, again asking it to co-operate in his salvage scheme. On the motion of Alderman RAC Adams the Council replied that it 'was perfectly satisfied with the local organisation and the distribution of money received'.¹⁴⁰ The Council then referred the information 'to the local organiser of the salvage scheme',¹⁴¹ that is, Irene Huthnance. Therefore, at this point, despite any official declaration, the Council considered that Huthnance was effectively in-charge of Camden's salvage collection. As far as the Council were concerned this was the

^{138.} *Camden News*, 3 April 1941.

^{139.} *Camden News*, 1 May 1941, 8 May 1941.

^{140.} *Camden News*, 5 June 1941.

^{141.} CMC, Minutes, 22 July 1940; *Camden News*, 1 August 1940.

most favourable position, because the salvage scheme was run at no cost to them, and the funds raised stayed in the town.

Huthnance continued to maintain the confidence of the Council, and had the foresight to restrict her collections to the town, thereby avoiding some of the problems encountered by Ben Young. She sought salvage from individuals and small businesses she knew, used local young people to help her and used her home as a collection point, and as a result ran a highly personalised campaign away from the direct influence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow.

The Council was informed of further administrative changes to salvage collection in November 1941 with the introduction of the *National Emergency (Salvage of Waste) Act 1941* (NSW).¹⁴² This legislation meant that Huthnance could no longer co-ordinate waste collection in the Camden area, and she was requested to forward her last consignment of salvage. In response the *Camden News* expressed its indignation at her removal, considering the 'wonderful work' she had done in the past.¹⁴³

By December, under the new arrangements, the Council had taken over the local salvage scheme. The Council promptly appointed Irene Huthnance as the honorary organiser. The Council maintained that she had 'capably managed this work in the past', it was pleased that she had 'graciously accepted the post' and the proceeds of sales would be distributed as they had been in the past.¹⁴⁴ Huthnance confirmed that she was 'now controller of the salvage on behalf of the Camden Municipal Council'. In effect the local salvage campaign proceeded as it had done before, and she sent the first consignment of waste paper to Australian Paper Manufacturers under the new arrangements in December 1941.¹⁴⁵

In August 1942, the Council was not impressed by a request from the State Government for an increased salvage effort. Stan Kelloway, Camden's mayor, indignantly maintained that the 'district was doing a great deal in this direction...[and if]...it [had] not been for been for Mrs Huthnance this district may have been as

^{142.} *Camden News*, 13 November 1941.

^{143.} *Camden News*, 9 October 1941, 27 November 1941.

^{144.} *Camden News*, 27 November 1941.

^{145.} *Camden News*, 4 December 1941.

[s]lack as many other municipalities and shires'.¹⁴⁶ Subsequently, the Controller of Salvage wrote to the Council complimenting them on their excellent results, noting that Camden's collections were high in comparison with other places in the local area. Camden Municipality had supplied 1,275lbs of waste paper collected per month per 1,000 of the population, while Wingecaribee Shire collected 1000lbs, Campbelltown Municipality 675lbs, Nattai Shire 585lbs and Wollondilly Shire 135lbs.¹⁴⁷ A motion of support was moved at a meeting of Camden Municipal Council which congratulated Huthnance on her efforts,¹⁴⁸ and the *Camden Advertiser* maintained that Huthnance's 'outstanding organising ability' was a 'credit' to her.¹⁴⁹ Huthnance was 'particularly pleased' with the 'success' of the Camden salvage effort,¹⁵⁰ but in reality, when Camden's collections are compared to some other Australian country towns they were relative minor. For example, in Colac, Victoria, the Colac Waste Products Auxiliary had over 100 volunteers and in the first three years of the war raised over £3,000, while Shepparton raised £500 in a similar period.¹⁵¹

From July 1943 Huthnance's salvage effort came under the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Salvage Commission. It took the new Commission, acting with the State Controller of Salvage, five months to implement its guidelines in the Camden area,¹⁵² and despite Lazzarini launching the campaign in September 1943, six months to organise the first appeal. In December the Salvage Campaign Council wrote to the Council seeking the appointment of a committee to supervise local salvage collection. In response the aldermen decided to form themselves into a committee, with the mayor as chairman and Irene Huthnance as controller.¹⁵³

In January 1944, the New South Wales Director of National Emergency Services sought the continued support of the Council,¹⁵⁴ and the Commonwealth Salvage Commission confirmed the appointment of the Camden mayor as chairman of the local salvage committee. The committee was made up of all the aldermen, and Irene

^{146.} *Camden News*, 13 August 1942.

^{147.} *Camden Advertiser*, 1 October 1942.

^{148.} *Camden News*, 1 October 1942; CMC, Minutes, 28 September 1942.

^{149.} *Camden Advertiser*, 1 October 1942.

^{150.} *Camden News*, 18 March 1943.

^{151.} Peel, 'Salvaging Community Pride', p. 7.

^{152.} Camden Municipal Council only received correspondence from the Commission in November. CMC, Minutes, 22 November 1943.

^{153.} *Camden News*, 30 December 1943; CMC, Minutes, 13 December 1943.

^{154.} *Camden News*, 13 January 1944; CMC, Minutes, 10 January 1944.

Huthnance.¹⁵⁵ In April 1944 the State Controller of the Commonwealth Salvage Commission forwarded a badge to the Council committee to officially identify committee members and volunteers.¹⁵⁶ In May 1944 the Commission conducted a salvage campaign for old rags, and the Council referred the correspondence to Huthnance in her capacity as the salvage controller.¹⁵⁷

The creation of the Commission had no practical impact on the collection of salvage in the Camden area, and the re-appointment of Huthnance reflected her dominance and social authority in the town. Huthnance had the ability to over-ride all changes and continually be re-appointed as Camden's salvage controller. All the feverish activity by the Commonwealth effectively came to very little because the Council did not take the Commonwealth initiatives in any serious way. The Commission saw its role as the direct control and co-ordination of the voluntary sector, which up to that point had largely been responsible for the success of the wartime salvage effort. Parochialism and general distrust of 'outsiders', in this case from Canberra, meant that there was no real enthusiasm for the Federal initiatives.¹⁵⁸ The Commission did not fully understand the powerful forces that surrounded parochialism and the need to gain local co-operation if a salvage campaign was to be successful.

It clearly suited Camden Municipal Council to retain Huthnance as the co-ordinator of the Camden salvage effort. Her initial appointment, and subsequent re-appointments, relieved the Council of the responsibility and cost of appointing one of their staff to the position. Given the cost of collecting salvage mentioned earlier, it would have been more than likely the council would not have bothered collecting salvage at all if they had not had a volunteer like Huthnance (similar to the attitude of Wollondilly Shire Council). Huthnance was also a sound political appointment because she was a member of the WVS and the only person who was seriously interested in organising salvage collections. Her success was due in no small part to her organisational ability, the time and labour she willingly provided free of charge

^{155.} *Camden News*, 27 January 1944; CMC, Minutes, 24 January 1944.

^{156.} CMC, Minutes, 24 April 1944.

^{157.} CMC, Minutes, 8 May 1944.

^{158.} By January 1944, 'only 22% of the municipalities in Australia had nominated a chairman or established a unit of the National Salvage Corps'. Peel, in her study of salvage collection in Colac, maintains that the response to the Commission's order ranged from compliant to active resistance. Peel, 'Salvaging community pride', pp. 11-12.

and her foresight to restrict her effort to the Camden township, while maintaining the support of the local press, the WVS, the Council and the community.

Conclusion

The general characteristics of Camden's civilian salvage effort illustrated the influence of the WVS voluntary service ethos beyond the women of the district and showed how the effort of Irene Huthnance and Ben Young was a microcosm of the issues in the thesis. Their duty and self-sacrifice demonstrated their service commitment to the WVS and the local war effort in particular. Young and Huthnance received a significant amount of prominence in, and kudos from, the local press, the Council and the general community for their patriotic effort. Their volunteering service also reflected some of the wider successes and failures Camden's wartime voluntarism.

The town's salvage effort has also shown that centralised decision making by 'outsiders' from Canberra and Sydney may have been an efficient means of directing the war effort, but it was not always warmly welcomed at a local level. Local patriotism was subject to the vagaries of the elements of Camden's class structure, conservatism, rural ideology and parochialism. If the administrative directives could not be adapted to local needs then salvage collection stopped. Conversely, if the directives could be adapted to local needs then collection continued.

Young's scheme is an example of the former. The combination of Weaver's perceived interference as an 'outsider', a clash of personalities, administrative confusion, Young's naivety and the interests of Sibella Macarthur Onslow created local disaffection with the collection of scrap metal. Young's scheme illustrated, yet again, the influence of Camden's rural ideology and how this social doctrine could circumvent state control of the war. Notions of national altruism and good intentions were not always enough to overcome Camden's conservatism and provincialism, which were highly resistant to, and resentful of, 'outside' interference in local affairs.

Huthnance's service commitment was representative of the issues surrounding the women's voluntarism that have been discussed in the thesis. Her loyalty to the WVS voluntary service ethos was based on her socialisation in Victorian notions of service. She developed a 'parallel power structure' for herself within Camden's female philanthropy and her membership of the WVS. She did this without challenging Camden's rural ideology, conservatism, patriarchy or class structure.

Young's failure and Huthnance's success highlight wider characteristics of Camden's wartime voluntarism. For example, unlike Young, Huthnance based her effort within Camden's private space, created a 'public persona' and used her social authority, which was considerable, to assist her with her salvage collections on a highly personalised basis. Unlike Huthnance, Young conducted his volunteering in Camden's public arena, and sought public acclaim for his effort (like other male volunteering practices in Camden discussed earlier in the thesis) and used the local press to air his grievances with Weaver. Huthnance restricted her salvage effort to Camden Municipality, unlike Young, who over estimated his own ability, attempted to deal with three local councils and unwittingly entered the sphere of influence of Sibella Macarthur Onslow through his involvement with Haddin and *Camden Park*. Huthnance's salvage effort was more manageable in terms of size and geographic area, had a very strong personal support base, and therefore avoided the petty provincialism that Young met in his effort. Huthnance sought donations from private individuals, used her home as a collection point and local teenagers to assist her effort, away from the direct influence of Macarthur Onslow.

Camden Municipal Council had sufficient confidence in Huthnance's ability to appoint her, then re-appoint her as the local controller of salvage, despite continuous changes in government administrative arrangements. The Council's response was partly guided by self-interest and cost considerations. Huthnance's altruism absolved it of any financial liability associated with the responsibilities for the local administration of salvage set down by the State and Commonwealth Governments, and thereby making salvage a worthwhile proposition in Camden. Her intrusion into the aldermen's male space did not challenge their public possession of power or patriarchy, and as a result the all-male Council was prepared to support her public possession of power. In the minds of local people Camden's civilian salvage effort was synonymous with Irene Huthnance.

CONCLUSION

The WVS was formed in Camden specifically to meet the needs of the Second World War. The women who joined the Camden WVS were typically middle aged, married, Protestant, conservative and British, and many had a grown up family. More significantly, most were members of Camden's middle and upper classes and its gentry. In this they were similar to many women who volunteered for similar organisations at the outbreak of war in Britain and Australia. They were hard workers for local causes and always had what they saw as the best interests of the community at heart.

The women of the Camden WVS, like other women their age, had been schooled in the Victorian notions of femininity and the 'ideals of service', attitudes which they passed on to their daughters. Some of these women had been members of the St John's Mothers' Union and some had been foundation members of the Camden Red Cross in 1914. Others had been members of Camden Girl Guides and the Junior Red Cross in their younger days and as they grew older became members of the Red Cross. The women of the Camden WVS felt that their main role in life was to nurture and care for their husbands and families. Their families came first, but they also felt an obligation to serve the community. The women brought these beliefs to the WVS and these beliefs guided their response to the war. This attitude of service was typical of women who joined other organisations within Camden's female philanthropy and the activities they undertook, particularly during the war.

The belief systems of these women were underpinned by Camden's rural ideology. There were many aspects to this ideology, for example parochialism, and it found expression in many of the activities of the WVS, from the defence of Ben Young to the production of comforts for local men, or 'our boys', and dealings with the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund. Wartime activities with a local focus always drew strong support from the WVS while those with a state, national or international focus rarely did as well. The one singular exception, of course, was the British Canteen Fund Appeal.

The belief system of the women of the Camden WVS was typical of their class groupings in Camden and was anchored firmly in their British origins. They

accepted the obligations and responsibilities of British citizenship and were patriotic members of the British Empire. Their family and friends had close connections with Britain. They wrote to relatives and friends, who often sent British papers out for them to read. They often referred to Camden as a 'little England'.¹ It was this sense of a strong connection with Britain that partly accounted for the success of the British Canteen Fund Appeal.

The women of the WVS had read about the work of Stella Reading and Ruby Board in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and when Camden's mayoress called a public meeting to discuss the establishment of a branch of the WVS in Camden it was well attended. The voluntary service ethos of the WVS fitted the values of the service ideology of Camden's British Victorian philanthropy. For them the WVS represented a little bit of Britain in Camden. Their voluntary service for the WVS was an act of patriotic altruism that involved self-sacrifice and dedication to duty. It looked back to the Victorian interpretation of femininity and its service obligations, and it agreed with their views of Christian charity drawn from their evangelical Protestantism that guided their giving and volunteering. As British citizens the women of the Camden WVS saw the war as a just and righteous one, and felt an obligation to help the Empire in any way they could. Volunteering for the WVS was an act of patriotism where their domestic skills and their total commitment to a project could be turned to a greater good and their reward was a sense of personal satisfaction and fulfilment. Irene Huthnance was probably an exemplar in this regard.

Class was one of the most important factors in Camden's social life and largely defined both the community's and the individual's sense of identity and subjectivity. Class ordered social events, inter-personal relationships, social networks and hierarchies and the town's social routine. It played a significant role in the activities of the WVS, and in one way or another all activities of the WVS were related to it. This was clearly evident in the role played by the Macarthur Onslow women.

The women who joined the Camden WVS had grown up under the influence of the Macarthur Onslow women, firstly Elizabeth then and her daughter, Sibella. Sibella

¹ Comment from a member of the Camden Historical Society. Meeting, Camden Historical Society, Camden, 9 November 1994.

Macarthur Onslow had a profound influence on all things that affected Camden, including the foundation of the WVS. If she had not sponsored it, it is highly unlikely that the Camden branch would ever have been formed. She gave it a legitimacy and social acceptability that ensured its success. Sibella provided the moral leadership for female philanthropy in Camden. She was a 'Lady Bountiful' figure in Camden and it was rare for any member of the community to escape her influence. She was the classic role model of a Victorian female philanthropist. Sibella and her mother had effectively controlled female philanthropy from 1900. It started with the Camden branch of the New South Wales Patriotic Fund in the Boer War, and then the Camden Red Cross in the First World War. These two organisations provided Camden women with valuable experience in war related voluntary work. The social authority of Camden's women's groups was consolidated after the First World War with the foundation of the CWA and Hospital Auxiliary, both of which gave valuable experience in committee work to local women. In 1939 the WVS brought all this experience together which assisted its success.

The place of class was also clearly reflected in the attitudes of the women of the WVS when it came to acknowledgment of their work. The socialisation of these women meant that they did not complain when they only received collective recognition for their community service, although, there were some notable exceptions to this rule (see the final report of the WVS). They accepted the fact that women like Sibella Macarthur Onslow and Zoe Crookston would play a leading organisational role, would speak for the organisation and would receive specific acknowledgment for the work of the WVS. They had always organised matters relating to volunteering and philanthropy before the war. It was also expected that women like Macarthur Onslow and Crookston would undertake their voluntary domestic activities like sewing and cooking in their private space, not in the public space like working bees, sewing for the camps or running the soldier comfort programs in the town and district.

The close bonds within the town's social networks, which were a related part of Camden's class structure, created the linkages between different class groupings and were part of the functioning of the WVS. They created a high level of intimacy and general knowledge of Camden's daily life amongst the women who joined the Camden WVS. These social processes often confounded 'outsiders', and some of the 'blow ins', and worked to exclude them from the community's social networks.

Provisional entry might be gained once 'outsiders' showed sympathy towards local interests, but permanent entry was more problematic. The forms of social interaction within these networks, and the associated hierarchies, were those that were sanctioned by Camden elite and ultimately determined the social influence of various organisations, including the WVS, and their ability to raise funds, attract members and undertake patriotic activities. These processes partly accounted for the success of the WVS and were evident in the soldier comforts programme, Young and Huthnance's salvage collection, the social position of Rita Tucker and amongst the volunteers at the Hospitality Centre.

The intimacy of rural life meant that individuals were expected to make an appropriate contribution to wartime appeals based on class considerations. Patriotism was equated with social status. The elite were expected to make large donations commensurate with the social rank, a type of fiscal patriotism. The WVS, and other organisations in Camden, used this social process to their advantage, especially in appeals such as the British Canteen Fund Appeal. Added potency was given to the process with the listing of names and donations in the Camden press. Local businesses were particularly vulnerable to this type of moral and social coercion, although Rita Tucker chose not to use it with the CWA

The enthusiasm of the women who joined the WVS was reflected in their willingness to participate in the activities that were organised by the WVS. Thus, when presented with the opportunity many registered and attended training lectures on first aid, home nursing, air raid precautions, motor maintenance and ambulance driving. Most of these were jointly organised with other associations. Some proved useful, while others, not.

The soldier comforts programme of the WVS became its most successful venture. In this activity women of the WVS equated sewing, knitting and cooking with national patriotism, and re-affirmed the social bonds between 'home' and the front line. It allowed the women to combine their service commitment to the community and their families through a patriotic activity. The women gained kudos and recognition for their effort from the hundreds of 'thank you' letters they received from 'the boys'. Their service commitment extended to collection of funds for appeals, volunteering to work at fundraisers like fairs, carnivals and street stalls (see the final

report of WVS), and their participation extended to activities not organised by the WVS, for example, making camouflage nets with the CWA and material contribution this provided to the war effort, volunteering at the Hospitality Centre and smaller contributions to other activities.

The Hospitality Centre was a marker in the history of WVS volunteering and the progress of the war in Camden. It was the most important voluntary activity in the town after 1944. It, and the circumstances surrounding its foundation, showed the town's response the threat of external influences brought on by the war, and the introduction of new ideas and social issues, without the moral leadership provided by Sibella Macarthur Onslow.

The relationship between the women of the WVS and Camden's male voluntarism was quite complex, and was influenced by class and the type of activity involved. The women of the WVS, and other organisations, possessed an immense amount of social authority and influence on matters related to community and soldier welfare. Yet, they accepted and did not openly challenge the position of patriarchy in Camden. On the one hand they allowed Camden men to accept the kudos for organising patriotic activities (for example, the soldier's farewells and the soldiers' recreation room), while on the other they served supper and cups of tea at the same patriotic functions and simply saw it as an extension of their service role. Yet on other occasions the same women from the WVS willingly took over the wartime activities started by the men's committees rather than see their demise (for example, the soldiers' recreation room and the RAAF comforts fund). Men ran their own wartime organisations (like the VDC) yet on other occasions needed the social authority of the WVS to legitimise their aims (for example Gibson's War-Time Plan). Men's organisations could not be seen, at least publicly, to be under the control of the women, such as the Men's WVS Auxiliary. Otherwise they withered away and died. Men's organisations like the RSSAILA gave the WVS strong support as long as they were seen to be independent of the women.

Religion, and the role it played in the WVS, was expressed as sectarianism and wowserism. It was partly responsible for the exclusiveness of the WVS membership and its low Catholic participation. It was also part of Camden's conservatism that was played out in the foundation of the Hospitality Centre and the inordinate social

influence of Camden's Methodists, for example George Sidman and Stan Kelloway. Sidman was a powerful voice for the conservative element in Camden through the pages of his newspaper. The *Camden News*, together with Gibson's *Camden Advertiser*, were strong supporters of the war and the WVS. Their efforts increased the respect for the WVS in the community, and hence its status and social authority, and thus its ability to garner the support of the community.

The progress of the war directly affected WVS activities. Up to the end of 1941 the war, and consequently the WVS, were primarily focused on activities in Europe and North Africa. The events at Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain encouraged the men in Camden to start a number of voluntary activities. After the Japanese entered the war the WVS re-directed its efforts away from Britain and concentrated its efforts on supporting local servicemen on active service through soldier comforts, and volunteering to assist the CWA and its camouflage net making (with nets going to New Guinea and other places), and making smaller contributions towards the efforts of the Civilian Aid Service and the National Emergency Services. While after 1943 the women volunteered at the Hospitality Centre.

A considerable part of the success of the WVS was based on the co-operation between the women's organisations in Camden. There was a good deal of cross membership amongst the women between the WVS, the Red Cross, the VAD, the CWA and the Hospital Auxiliary, which reflected the influence of the local social networks. The principal social group within the networks was the female clique, who ensured that these organisations eliminated unnecessary duplication, for example amongst the various sewing workshops. Under the guidance and influence of the female clique, which up to 1943 was led by Sibella Macarthur Onslow, women's organisations in Camden had an unassailable position in Camden's wartime voluntarism. When the women's clique was combined with the men's equivalent, they became a de-facto patriotic committee. This combined group ran the town's response to the war, and in the process strengthened the hand of the WVS.

The closure of the WVS at the end of the war was a small affair and did not have any great effect on Camden's female philanthropy. There was continuity of the service ideology within Camden's female voluntary organisations beyond the war years, despite the closure of the WVS and other war generated organisations. The war had

ended and the women saw no further need for the WVS. Thus the closure only received a small report in the local press (see the final report of the WVS). After the WVS wound up in late 1945, its funds were transferred to a new organisation, the Camden District Patriotic Fund that operated from 1945 to 1949, which then became the Camden Returned Servicemen's League Women's Auxiliary in 1959. The WVS also laid the groundwork for the post-war emergence of Rita Tucker as the leader of the female clique. Apart from a small break in the late 1940s she led the Camden CWA until her death in 1961 and became the natural successor to Sibella Macarthur Onslow. Tucker was a foundation member of the WVS and was largely responsible for close relationship between it and CWA during the war. The experience the women gained in the WVS helped the CWA to become the most important women's organisations in Camden after the war. The Red Cross declined in influence and members.

The story of the women of the WVS in Camden is therefore one of continuity and change, and has similar elements to the stories of many women who volunteered for service during the war in Camden and elsewhere. Parts of their voluntary service ethos can be identified in the few studies that have been undertaken of country towns, such Colac, Whyalla and Albury, and in organisations like the British WVS or the New South Wales WVS. Whether the experience of the Camden WVS was typical, or atypical, of the experience of the WVS in other communities cannot be established. Were the combination of factors identified by the thesis unique to Camden? Without studies of a similar nature it is difficult to tell. What the thesis has shown is that local studies of rural communities are highly complex. And getting to grips with them requires an understanding of the cultural and ethical traditions of these communities. Broad general histories of rural communities are satisfactory if their stated aim is an overview, but they are not sufficient to achieve a detailed analysis of the social structures and processes of these communities, especially during wartime.

The thesis has also shown that rural communities have their own character and identity based on bonds and networks that are the social threads of the community, and have contributed to their existing ideologies (rural ideology and service ideology). Critical events such as wars, and the organisations they generate, provide an easy access point to unravelling the intricacies and subtleties that make up the

social relationships within the community. Rural communities in wartime provide an ideal model for this type of historical research.

The thesis has demonstrated the importance of female voluntarism in the town's war effort. Within the broader literature in the field, it adds to the growing body of work that examines wartime voluntarism in Australia, such as studies conducted by Oppenheimer. The thesis also adds to the small but growing area of the historiography of rural communities in wartime discussed in Chapter One, with the work of scholars such as McQuilton, Pennay, Peel, Stanley and others. These are the building blocks that make up the area of local studies and war in Australia and have added to the mosaic that makes up Australian military history.

APPENDICES

CHRONOLOGY OF WARTIME EVENTS

CAMDEN

1938

16 May Foundation of British WVS.

1939

6 April Lady Mayoress of Sydney inaugurates New South Wales WVS.
13 April Mayoress of Camden convenes committee to form WVS.
20 April Dr Crookston gives first air raid lectures.
27 April Formation of Camden WVS.
9 May WVS meeting at town hall to organise volunteers for national emergency.
30 May Camden WVS and Camden Red Cross jointly establish VAD.
3 September Declaration of war against Germany.
7 September Inaugural meeting of Camden VAD.
11 September Stan Kelloway, Camden mayor, appointed chief warden.
13 September Foundation of Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of New South Wales.
2 October Establishment of Eastern Command Training School at Studley Park, Narellan.
5 October Driving course for women ambulance drivers.
9 November WVS authorised to collect funds as auxiliary of Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund.
14 November Foundation of Women's War Comforts Section of Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund of New South Wales.
30 November Camden WVS send first soldier comforts to 45th Militia Battalion at Menangle Park Racecourse.

1940

11 January	WVS meeting to explain aims of the Women's Comforts Section of the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund.
15 February	WVS sent first consignment of waste paper.
22 February	Camden WVS representatives attend first AGM of New South Wales WVS in Sydney.
March	First weekly distribution of soldier comforts to Camden servicemen.
4 April	Establishment of RAAF Central Flying School at Camden aerodrome.
29 May	Evacuation of Dunkirk.
11 June	Ben Young of Werombi forms Camden district scrap iron organisation.
13 June	Public meeting to establish comforts fund for RAAF Central Flying School.
20 June	Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society decide to open Soldier Recreation Room at agricultural hall.
21 June	First soldier farewell for twenty-one Camden volunteers.
4 July	First honor roll of men of active duty in <i>Camden News</i> (list in <i>Camden Advertiser</i> 11 July 1940).
11 July	Meeting to re-establish Camden sub-branch of RSSAILA.
26 July	Second soldier farewell for twenty-three volunteers.
8 August	<i>Camden Advertiser</i> War-Time Plan commences.
26 September	Launch of appeal for Great Britain War Relief Fund.
26 September	First consignment of waste paper for Irene Huthnance and Ben Young.
14 October	Establishment of Narellan military camp.
25 October	Third soldier farewell at agricultural hall.
19 December	Camden Soldiers and Citizen's Association registered under <i>Charitable Collection Act</i> (NSW)
27 December	Fourth soldier farewell.

1941

13 January	Launch of appeal for Greek War Relief Fund.
16 January	First casualty from Camden area - Private E. Alan Davies in Middle East.

30 January	Ben Young withdraws from salvage scheme.
6 February	Camden Rifle Club wound up.
3 April	Major Denzil Macarthur Onslow awarded DSO for military service in North Africa.
20 May	Camden CWA starts making camouflage nets.
23 May	Camden WVS starts making camouflage nets.
26 May	First local man killed in action - Private E. McGrath.
9 June	Launch of WVS mobile canteen fund for Great Britain in Camden.
10 July	Camden Soldiers' and Citizens' Association wound up with funds going to Camden WVS.
31 July	First dance at Camden town hall to aid Catholic United Services Auxiliary.
21 August	Camden declared a vulnerable area under National Emergency Service regulations.
21 September	First blackout practice in Camden.
11 October	Opening of Church of England National Emergency Fund Hut at Narellan military camp.
10 November	Launch of Camden Red Cross Prisoner of War Appeal.
4 December	Camden Municipal Council appoints Irene Huthnance as Camden controller of salvage.
11 December	Declaration of war with Japan.
18 December	Joint WVS and CWA meeting for camouflage net making.

1942

29 January	Evacuation plan drawn up for Camden.
	First meeting for implementation of scorched earth policy.
3 February	Air raid precaution test in Camden.
15 February	Singapore falls.
17 March	General Macarthur arrives in Australia.
18 April	RAAF Central Flying School moves from Camden aerodrome to Point Cook, Victoria.
23 April	Establishment of Voluntary Air Observation Corp in Camden with observer post in Macarthur Park.
31 May	Japanese submarines enter Sydney Harbour.
4 June	Registration for evacuation in Camden.
9 June	Formation of Civilian War Emergency Aid Service in Camden.

- 16 July WVS organise weekly sewing party for Narellan military camp.
- 3 September National Day of Prayer in Camden.
- 27 September Air raid practice test in Camden.
- 8 October WVS Christmas hamper list first published in *Camden News*.
- 12 November Blackout test in Camden.
- 26 November Establishment of War Agricultural Committee.
- 15 December National Emergency Services test incident in Camden.

1943

- 4 February Coal strike at Wollondilly Colliery.
- 4 April Lifting of brown out in Camden.
- 8 April National Emergency Services test incident in Camden.
- 26 May Air raid siren installed in Macarthur Park.
- 1 July Sunday sport referendum.
- 16 July Death of Sibella Macarthur Onslow.

1944

- 25 January Initial Sunday pub crawl by 400 servicemen from Sydney in Camden.
- 30 January Eleven arrests at subsequent pub crawl by servicemen in Camden.
- 16 February Camouflage netting stops in Camden.
- 23 February Establishment of YMCA-ACF Hospitality Centre in Camden.
- 16 March First weekly roster by local women for Hospitality Centre.
- 13 October Civilian Aid Service discontinued.
- 2 November Closure of Narellan military camp.

1945

- 9 February No. 243 RAF Transport Squadron arrives at Camden aerodrome (other RAF squadrons follow).
- 3 May Formation of women's auxiliary of Camden RSSAILA.
- 9 July Launch of appeal for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

20 September Voluntary Air Observer Corp wound up.
20 December Camden WVS wound up.

1946

7 March War Agricultural Committee wound up.
14 May YMCA-ACF Hospitality Centre closes.
6 September Welcome Home Committee Dinner.

Camden Centre of the Women's Voluntary Services

Membership 1940-1945

Last Name First Name Husb First Name

Adams	Miss Evelyn	
Adams	Mrs RA	Robert Arthur
Boardman	Mrs RF	Ray Stephen
Bowman	Mrs	
Bruchhauser	Miss C	
Bruchhauser	Miss L	
Burford	Mrs	
Burnell	Mrs Dorothy	George
Campbell	Mrs A	
Chapman	Mrs KG	
Clifton	Mrs I	
Clifton	Mrs W	
Clinton	Mrs J	
Collins	Mrs G	
Crookston	Mrs Zoe	Robert Melville
Cruickshank	Mr	
Davies	Miss Llewella	
Davies	Mrs EA (Mary)	
de Saxe	Mrs L (Mary)	
Dickenson	Mrs GD (Annie)	
Dickenson	Miss (Yvonne)	
Ditton	Miss E	
Dixon	Mrs	
Doust	Mrs R	
Downes	Mrs RFA (Katie)	Rupert
Downes	Mrs E	
Driscoll	Mrs L (Lillian)	
Duck	Mrs	
Dunk	Mrs F (Kathleen)	
Dunk	Mrs	
Dunne	Miss	
Eldred	Mrs	
Evans	Mrs C (Mary)	
Faithfull Anderson	Mrs (Francis Lillian)	
Fox	Mrs J	
Franklin	Mrs F	
Freestone	Miss Nancy	
Freestone	Miss O	
Furner	Mrs PC (Emma)	
Fussell	Mrs L	
George	Mrs	
Gibson	Mrs Elsie	Arthur Gordon
Gibson	Mr AG	
Gillespie	Miss	
Gillespie	Mrs	

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Husb First Name</u>
Glover	Mrs	
Haigh	Mrs L	
Hall	Mrs	
Harvey	Miss	
Haylock	Mrs H	
Haytor	Mrs H	
Hickey	Mrs L	
Hodgson	Mrs	
Hughes	Mrs	
Huthnance	Mrs Irene	John Beetson
Huthnance	Mrs L	
Hynes	Miss	
Jefferis	Mrs JT	Robert
Johnson	Mrs Eileen	Arthur Griffiths
Jollife	Mrs	
Kelloway	Mrs HS (Minnie)	Horace Stanley
King	Mrs S	Sydney
Larkin	Mrs Doris	Willie
Macarthur Onslow	Miss Rose Sibella	
Macdonald	Mrs (Eleanor)	
Mackie	Mrs E	
Mason	Mrs Elsie	
McEwan	Mrs AK	Alfred Keith
McIntosh	Miss	
McLeod	Mrs JV (Leah)	
McLeod	Miss Beatrice	
McMinn	Mrs J	
Miller	Mrs	
Moore	Miss EHG (Grace)	
Moore	Miss Hilda L	
Moore	Miss D	
Moore	Miss M	
Moreings	Mrs	
Mulholland	Mrs C	Cecil Charles
Munday	Mrs L	
Neal	Mrs AE	
Osborne	Mrs M	
Outterside	Mrs (Harriett)	
Pattison	Mrs Margaret	Will
Paul	Mrs Edna	Thomas Giles
Ping	Mrs	
Poole	Mrs F (Martha)	Frank
Pope	Mrs C (Alice)	
Porter	Miss Isabella	
Porter	Mrs G	
Porter	Miss Amy	
Powe	Mrs Eveline	Harold Ritchie

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>	<u>Husb First Name</u>
Price	Mrs B	
Price	Mrs AE	
Pritchard	Mrs	
Rix	Mrs A	
Rofe	Mrs Esther	
Schole	Mrs Sarah	Joshua
Sharp	Mrs L	
Shiels	Mrs LL	
Slee	Mrs	
Smart	Mrs AT	
Spooner	Miss	
Stibbard	Mrs Clair	Jack
Taplin	Mr A	
Tate	Mrs	
Taylor	Mrs G	
Terry	Mrs Albine	
Thomas	Mr AW	
Thomas	Mrs AW	
Tucker	Mrs RC	
Veness	Mrs J	
Walters	Mrs	
Watson	Mrs	
Whiteman	Mrs Annie	Frederick Keith
Williams	Mrs	
Willmont	Mrs	
Young	Mrs BF	

Source: Camden News, Minutes

Camden Women's Voluntary Services

Year: 1940

Source: *CN 18 July 1940*

Patron: Miss Faithfull Anderson

President: Mrs RM Crookston

Vice-President1: Mrs HS Kelloway

Vice-President2: Miss S Macarthur Onslow

Secretary: Miss EHG Moore

Ass Secretary: Miss Nancy Freestone

Treasurer: Mrs AE Terry

Committee

Red Cross Rep: Miss HL Moore,

Mother's Club: Mrs AG Johnson

CWA: Mrs RC Tucker, Mrs HR Powe

Hospital Aux: Miss L Davies

Scout's Committ: Mrs S King

District Representatives

Werombi: Mrs BF Young, Miss Adams

Theresa Park: Mrs RFA Downes, Mrs L Munday

Committee Members

Member1: Mrs KG Chapman

Member2: Mrs RE Jefferis

Member3: Mrs JB Huthnance

Member4: Mrs W Larkin

Member5: Mrs JV McLeod

Member6: Mrs C Mulholland

Member7: Miss I Porter

Member8: Mrs J Scholes

Member9: Mrs J Stibbard

Member10: Mrs F Whiteman

Camden Women's Voluntary Services

Year: 1941

Source: *CN 19 June 1941*

Patron: Miss Faithfull Anderson

President: Mrs RM Crookston

Vice-President1: Mrs HS Kelloway

Vice-President2: Miss S Macarthur Onslow

Secretary: Miss EHG Moore

Ass Secretary: Miss N Freestone

Treasurer: Mrs AE Terry

Committee

Red Cross Rep: Vacant

Mother's Club: Vacant

CWA: Vacant

Hospital Aux: Vacant

Scout's Committ: Vacant

District Representatives

Werombi: Vacant

Theresa Park: Vacant

Committee Members

Member1: Mrs Adams

Member2: Mrs G Burnell

Member3: Mrs L de Saxe

Member4: Mrs R Downes

Member5: Mrs A Gibson

Member6: Mrs JB Huthnance

Member7: Mrs W Larkin

Member8: Mrs AK McEwan

Member9: Mrs JV McLeod

Member10: Mrs L Monday

Member11: Miss HL Moore

Member12: Mrs F Poole

Member13: Miss I Porter

Member14: Mrs HR Powe

Member15: Mrs J Scholes

Member16: Mrs J Stibbard

Member17: Mrs RC Tucker

Income

Year	Total Income	Donations	Sale of Scrap Iron	Sale of Scrap Paper	Dances	Street Stalls	Afternoon Teas	Sale of Jams	Carnivals Concerts	Garden Fete	Sub-Centres Douglas Park	Menangle	Other
30th June 19--	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
1940	104	87		2			12						3
1941	511	205	24	23	77	36	44		80		14	8	
1942	788	210	21	76	205	79	27		68		59	14	29
1943	834	205		45	273	139	23	17	53	43	20	5	11
1944	976	375		32	168	81	21	26	183		28	20	42
1945	850	274		29	167	181	16	13	113		18	10	29

Expenditure

Year	Total Expenditure	Comforts Servicemen	Other	Comforts Rec Room	Waits/Note Enlisting	Donations
30th June 19--	£	£	£	£	£	£
1939						
1940	59	55	2			2
1941	464	318	48	44		56
1942	756	511	9	19		217
1943	847	673			88	86
1944	835	684	16		49	86
1945	860	767	14		18	61

Membership

Nos
100
63

Source: Camden News
All numbers rounded

Comforts							Parcels	
Year 30th June 19--	Socks	Sea Boots Stockings	Balaclava Caps	Pullovers SI/Sless	Mittens Gloves	Underpants	Weekly	Xmas Hampers
1940	516	16	16	6	12		74	
1941	850	30	30	60	40	224	500	[40]
1942						1050	1440	
1943	500						1800	200
1944	310						1800	312
1945	200							356
	2376	46	46	66	52	1274	5614	908
Grand Totals								
							Parcels Comforts	6482 3860

Source: Camden News

Camden Branch of the Country Women's Association

Membership 1940-1945

Last Name

First Name

Allard	Mrs
Armour	Mrs
Arnott	Mrs
Biffin	Mrs C
Blow	Mrs
Bowen	Mrs
Bowerman	Mrs
Bowman	Mrs
Britton	Mrs
Bruchhauser	Miss
Bruchhauser	Miss
Burns	Mrs
Butler	Mrs
Byrnes	Mrs F
Carrol	Mrs
Cassimatis	Mrs
Chapman	Mrs
Clarke	Mrs C
Clinton	Mrs W
Coleman	Mrs
Cork	Miss
Cranfield	Mrs H
Davies	Mrs
Dawson	Mrs
de Saxe	Mrs
Dengate	Mrs
Donnelly	Mrs
Downes	Mrs R
Downes	Mrs E
Driscoll	Mrs D
Edgar	Mrs
Essy	Mrs
Evans	Mrs
Faithful-Anderson	Miss
Furner	Mrs P
Garland	Mrs
George	Mrs
Gibb	Mrs
Gill	Mrs
Gillett	Mrs
Ginge	Mrs
Glover	Mrs F
Gracie	Miss
Graham	Mrs
Griffith	Mrs F
Hanger	Mrs H
Harris	Mrs
Haylock	Mrs
Hayter	Mrs
Hodge	Mrs
Hodgson	Mrs
Huthnance	Mrs
Inglis	Mrs
Jackman	Mrs

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name</u>
Jackson	Mrs
Jeffries	Mrs R
Jeffries	Mrs J
Johnstone	Mrs
Kelloway	Mrs
Larkin	Mrs
Leo	Mrs
Lindbach	Mrs
Longley	Mrs
Loomes	Miss
Lowe	Mrs
Mason	Mrs
McCann	Mrs
McIntosh	Mrs
McKellar	Mrs
McLelland	Mrs
McLeod	Mrs
Moore	Miss M
Moore	Mrs AV
Mullholland	Mrs
Murdoch	Mrs
Neal	Mrs
New	Mrs
Patterson	Mrs
Peat	Mrs
Poole	Mrs M
Porter	Mrs C
Porter	Mrs G
Porter	Miss A
Porter	Miss I
Powe	Mrs H
Rix	Mrs
Rofe	Mrs
Rofe	Miss
Rogers	Miss D
Roots	Mrs
Rothe	Mrs
Rouse	Mrs
Sharman	Mrs
Sharpe	Mrs
Shaw	Mrs
Shipp	Mrs
Sidman	Mrs G
Staniforth	Mrs
Stippard	Mrs
Swan	Mrs
Tailand	Mrs
Terry	Mrs
Thomas	Mrs
Tucker	Mrs R
Walters	Mrs
Wheatley	Mrs
Whiteman	Mrs
Woodhouse	Mrs

Camden Country Women's Association

Patron: Miss CV Faithfull Anderson	Year: 1942
President: Mrs RC Tucker	Source: Minutes 24 November 1942
Secretary: Mrs HR Powe	Membership: 70
Treasurer: Mrs F Glover	SourceMbrshp: Minutes
Vice-Presidents Town & Country	
VP1Town: Mrs PC Furner	VP3Town: Vacant
VP2Town: Mrs LF de Saxe	
VP1Country: Mrs R Downes	
VP2Country: Miss I Porter	
VP3Country: Mrs A Rix	
VP4Country: Mrs JH Byrne	
Rest Room Committee	Netting Secr: Mrs Una Swan
RRC1: Miss D Rogers	
RRC2: Mrs C Evans	
Secretary War Savings Group	
WS1: Mrs Swan	

SUMMARY LIST OF ORGANISATIONS ON THE CAMDEN HOMEFRONT

PRINCIPAL ORGANISATIONS GENERATED BY THE SECOND WORLD WAR

This is not an exhaustive list, and does not include many local organisations that gave occasional donations to appeals, funds and wartime causes which were not recognised in the local newspapers. Neither does it include responsibilities delegated to Camden Municipal Council, for example, recruiting, war loans, war damage insurance.

Women's Voluntary Services

Formation: 13 April 1939. Aim: to train women for national work and to enrol and train them for 'any national emergency'. The New South Wales state executive stated the purpose of the WVS was 'To render service in any way required to meet the needs of the community in wartime'. The activities of the Camden WVS included: Air raid precautions lectures; first aid training; home nursing training; sewing, knitting, provision of soldier comforts; fundraising for wartime charities; providing volunteers for salvage collection, hospitality centre, soldiers' recreation room, soldier's farewells, street stalls; joint ventures with the NES: lorry and ambulance driving training, and first aid course. Joint ventures with Camden Red Cross: sewing party, VAD, first aid course, home nursing course. Joint venture with CWA: camouflage netting. Fundraising: stalls, carnivals, dances, fetes and donations. Closed on 6 December 1945.

YMCA-ACF Hospitality Centre

Formation: 23 February 1944. Aim: to provide recreational facilities for service personnel while in Camden. Volunteers provided suppers, 'good company' in 'convivial surroundings'. The centre was managed by a Sydney YMCA field representative with a volunteer management and fundraising committee. Closure: 14 May 1946.

Camden Soldiers' and Citizens' Association

Formation: 7 June 1940. Purpose was to organise soldier's farewells. Its patrons were Major General JW Macarthur Onslow (Sibella's brother) and the mayor, Stan Kelloway. Closure: 10 July 1941.

Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia

Re-formation: 11 July 1940, formerly Camden Returned Soldiers' Fraternity. Membership made up of First World War veterans. Purpose: to hold fundraising dances for WVS, provide volunteers for Hospitality Centre. It continued after the war.

Women's Auxiliary, Camden RSSAILA

Formation: 3 May 1945. Purpose: to assist ex-servicemen. Continued after the war.

National Emergency Services

Authority delegated to mayor who is appointed as chief warden of Camden Municipality under National Emergency Services Regulations. Purpose: civil defence. Activities: appointment of chief warden, deputy chief warden, wardens (1942 - 87 wardens in Camden and Narellan area); blackout of town; NES tests – 21 September 1941, 3 February 1942, 19 April 1942, 27 September 1942, 12 November 1942, 15 December 1942, 28 February 1943, 14 March 1943; air raid precautions and shelters - demonstration – 31 March 1942; communications; emergency ambulances; first aid parties; first aid post, decontamination squads; fire fighting; scorched earth policy; evacuation plan and register; Civilian War Emergency Aid Service.

Scorched Earth Policy Committee

Formation: 7 January 1942. Purpose: to formulate policy for evacuation of cattle from district through Burragorang Valley to Oberon. Appointed farmer and business representatives to discuss scorched earth policy.

Volunteer Air Observers Corps

Formation: 23 April 1942. Purpose: to notify of passing of any aircraft. Activities: observation post in Macarthur Park; operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Organised by RSS&AILA. Under control of RAAF. Fundraising: dances, boxing and vaudeville night. Closure: 22 September 1945.

Civilian War Emergency Aid Service

Formation: 9 June 1942. Purpose: to provide housing, food and clothing for local people at any time in grave emergency (invasion) with subsequent evacuation of the Camden community. Under control of NES. Activities: Rest centres; fundraising;

tests – 7 November 1942. Membership: 12 volunteers (1944). Closure: 24 August 1944.

Camden War Agricultural Committee

Formation: 21 October 1942. Purpose: to ensure the smooth running of agriculture in the immediate districts in light of labour shortages, transport problems; to advise, arrange and organise best use of manpower; report difficulties in having farm machinery repaired. Closure: 7 March 1946.

Volunteer Defence Corps

Formation: 22 August 1940. Purpose: to form home guard protect Cataract and Cordeaux Dams, and local portion of Sydney water supply canal. Membership: 30 (1940), 77 (1941). Eligibility: all volunteers must be ineligible for military service and be between 35-65 years of age. Activities: parades held on Tuesday nights at AH&I Hall, 8.00pm; parades consist of drilling, use of prismatic compass, general principles of attack and defence; exercises; Sydney parades (1940). Formation of horse commandoes (1942) - no enthusiasm. VDC stood down: September 1945.

2/1 Australian Light Horse (Machine Gun) Regiment

Local militia (1940). Activities: exercises (1939); dance (1940).

Volunteer Aid Detachment

Re-formation: 7 September 1939. Jointly re-formed by Red Cross and WVS. Activities: Drill, parades, hospital duty, fundraising dances. Membership: 23 (1939) Continued after war.

Camden Business Girls' Prisoner of War Comforts Fund

Formation: 7 August 1941. Aims: Fundraising. Activities: Fundraising for Red Cross POW comforts fund. Membership: 11 (1946). Closure: 1946

RAAF-CFS Comforts Fund

Formation: 13 June 1940. Purpose: to provide comforts for RAAF personnel at Central Flying School at Camden aerodrome. Fundraising: dance with CWA Younger Set (6/40). Closure: September 1940.

Catholic United Service Auxiliary

Formation: December 1939. Purpose: fundraising for Auxiliary. Activities: Dances, pageant, carnival. Closure: July 1946.

Camden Repatriation Committee

Formation: 1945. Purpose: fundraising for hospitality centre.

Dairy Factory Manpower Committee

Formation: September 1942. Purpose: to assist manpower problems in local dairying industry through co-operation with local War Agricultural Committees. Committees at Camden, Campbelltown, Menangle.

Burraborang District Public School Teacher's Patriotic Association

Formation: 29 February 1940. Purpose: fundraising. Activities: dance. Membership: 16 (1940).

Bringelly-Rossmore Comforts Fund Committee

Formation: 1944. Aim and purpose: fundraising for comforts for AIF.

Bringelly-Rossmore Red Cross

Formation: September 1939. Membership: 9 (1939). General Red Cross activities and fundraising.

Douglas Park Patriotic Fund

Formation: April 1941. Purpose: fundraising. Activities: Fundraising for wartime appeals.

Mount Hunter Ladies Committee

Formation: 1942. Purpose: fundraising for various wartime charities. (1942 raised £402).

Nepean Shire Patriotic Fund

Formation: 1940. Aim and purpose: fundraising for the Lord Mayor's Patriotic and War Fund and other wartime appeals.

Oakdale Citizens War Effort

Formation: 1941. Fundraising for wartime effort.

Orangeville-Werombi Win The War Effort

Formation: 30 May 1940. Purpose and activities: Collection of scrap metal; fundraising for wartime appeals; sending comforts to local servicemen of active service.

Theresa Park Win The War Effort Committee

Formation: September 1940. Purpose and activities: fundraising for wartime appeals, house parties.

OTHER MAJOR CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS

This is not an exhaustive list of on-going Camden organisations that contributed in their normal operations to the war effort. For example, sporting clubs are not listed.

Camden Red Cross

Formation: 14 August 1914. Aims: 'To provide for the needs of the sick and wounded...' more specifically 'to co-operate with the St John Ambulance', to men and women in Voluntary Aid Detachments, 'to organise work parties for the making and collecting of hospital comforts and clothing...to collect money to equip detachments, and for other Red Cross purposes'. (Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson, 1914). Activities between 1939-1945: POW Adoption Appeal and other general wartime appeals, soldier comforts, hospital supplies, sewing workshops. Joint activities with WVS - VAD, sewing party to Narellan military camp, first aid courses, home nursing courses; Junior Red Cross. Fundraising: stalls, carnivals, collections, donations competitions. Membership: Closure: Continued after the war.

Narellan Red Cross

Formation: 1915. Membership: 63 (1939-1941). General Red Cross activities and fundraising.

Menangle Red Cross

Formation: August 1914. General Red Cross activities and fundraising.

The Oaks Red Cross

Formation: September 1915. Membership: 24 (1941). General Red Cross activities and fundraising activities.

Camden CWA.

Formation: 1930. Aim: 'To improve the welfare and conditions of women and children in the country...' (New South Wales Annual Report, 1939). Wartime activities: manufacturing camouflage nets; baby health centre; entertaining female service personnel; members volunteer for various wartime activities in Camden; CWA Younger Set – wartime activities: sew and repair clothing for airmen.

Returned Soldiers' Fraternity

Purpose and activities: Convened meeting for soldier's farewells and formation of Camden Soldiers' and Citizens' Association (1940).

Camden Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Society

Formation: 1886. Aim: the advancement and development of the Camden district (1886). Wartime activities: establishment of soldiers' recreation room in June 1940; subscriptions sent to government as 'contribution to war purposes' (1941); Camden shows cancelled for duration of war; fundraising for aeroplane fund (1941). Continued after the war.

Women's Auxiliary, Camden District Hospital

Formation: 1933. Purpose: fundraising for the needs of the hospital.

Upper Burragorang Racing Club

Purpose: holding patriotic race meeting (1941).

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